

Peace, Happiness and Fulfilment–II

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Desires

We spoke of peace. How do we have peace? The real peace is to be found in the peace of mind. The peacefulness of the mind comes only when a person has learned to overcome his desires. This issue of desires is something very huge. All of us have certain desires and desire is basic to life because without desire there is no life. Without desire body cannot be sustained. Sri Ramakrishna says, if someone becomes absolutely desireless, he attains the state of *nirvikalpa samādhi*. There absolutely is no desire left. That means, in that state the body will disintegrate. We have life, because we have desires. But then what do the scriptures mean when they tell us to get away from desires or overcome desires? To begin with, what they mean to say is that we must make a distinction between need and greed. This is my need and beyond that whatever I am seeking is because of greed. While need must be looked into and must be fulfilled, greed is infinite and will never be fulfilled. Greed regenerates itself like the legendary demon, ‘Raktabeeja’, that is spoken of in the *Durga Saptashati*. If a drop of blood falls from the body of a ‘Raktabeeja’ to the ground, it immediately takes the shape of another ‘Raktabeeja’. So the Divine Mother licks up all the drops of blood that fall from his body. This is a symbolic way of saying that there is a divine power present in all of us which

analyses all the desires that arise in our mind and decides whether they are needs or our greeds. If they are greeds, they are simply thrown away; and if they are needs, they are properly analysed. So overcoming desires is very basic to finding lasting peace and happiness.

We have to analyse what is desire. In Sanskrit one name for desire is *Eshanā* or wanting to go toward something. *Eshanā* implies a kind of *abhāva*. What is *abhāva*? A lack. I lack something. That is why I desire something. So this simple principle of analysing what is need and what is greed will be a great help in solving the problem of overcoming desires. What are our needs? We have certain basic needs. Then there are cultural needs, social needs—a plethora of needs around us. In short, we seek inner joy, inner peace from things that we think may outwardly fulfil our sense of *abhāva* or lack.

The inner reservoir

In *Shvetashvatara* Upanishad we get a beautiful statement which says that man will attain eternal peace only if he discovers the Self within. This idea of Self within and discovering it is very fundamental to the whole idea of spiritual living. Once you discover that inner source, the mind calms down and this is what is meant by eternal peace. When the mind calms down, it is almost in the state of what we call no-mind. It’s not calming down in a temporary sense. It is a permanent calming down of the mind

that is spoken of here. If the mind is purified, there is no sense of lack, there is no restlessness for things of the world. One who is in such a state of complete inner poise is called *sthitaprajna* in the *Bhagavad-Gītā*. It is a state of steady wisdom. This is to be attained. This is the pathway to eternal peace, to eternal joy, or to meaningfulness in life. This is to be attained through the path that we call the path of yoga.

Swami Vivekananda has spoken of this as the path which we must take through our different faculties. When we take up this path through our willpower or our capacity for work, we call it *karmayoga*. When we take it through the path of analysis, the path of reasoning with a purified mind, we call it *jnānayoga*. When we take up the path of pure love, bereft of all attachments and all lustfulness, it is *bhaktiyoga*. When we try to meditate, and use the power of concentration to focus within, there is the path of *rājayoga* or *dhyānayoga*. So these four paths, which Swami Vivekananda has spoken of, are paths to eternal peace, eternal happiness and eternal fulfilment. He said, yes, you can take up any of these paths, and try to practise it, but still better it would be, if you could harmonize these four paths in your life. Because we all need to work, we may practise *karmayoga*. We all have the

capacity of reasoning; we may purify our reasoning and follow the path of *jnānayoga*. Let us purify our emotions and direct them towards the Divine and that is *bhaktiyoga*. Then there is the path of concentration or calming the mind. When we try to harmonize all these four in our lives, Swami Vivekananda says, we attain to a state of complete Self-manifestation. He says,

Each soul is potentially divine. The goal is to manifest this Divinity within, by controlling nature, external and internal. Do this either by work, or worship, or psychic control, or philosophy—by one or more or all of these—and be free. This is the whole of religion. Doctrines, or dogmas, or rituals, or books, or temples, or forms, are but secondary details.

We began this talk by referring to a verse from the *Kathopanishad*. Let us turn within, try to slowly train our senses not to go out in search of fulfilment too much and rather search for that fulfilment within. This is to be sought by selfless work outside and, by meditating and controlling the mind. I am sure all of you would reflect on what we have discussed and read the *Gospel of Sri Ramakrishna* and Swami Vivekananda's teachings to get an idea of what really constitutes true happiness, true peace and true fulfilment. ■

From 'The Song of the Sannyāsin'

Have thou no home. What home can hold thee, friend?
The sky thy roof, the grass thy bed; and food
What chance may bring, well cooked or ill, judge not.
No food or drink can taint that noble Self
Which knows Itself. Like rolling river free
Thou ever be, Sannyāsin bold! Say—

“Om Tat Sat, Om!”

—Swami Vivekananda