

## Moving from Worldly Limitations to Spiritual Freedom

### Spiritual Wisdom

*A boat may stay in the water, but water should not stay in the boat. An aspirant may live in the world, but the world should not live in him.*

— Sri Ramakrishna

The Indian sage Sri Ramakrishna also describes the state of a spiritually aware person as being like a nanny in a rich family who brings up the child in her care with the same love as if it were her own, but who knows full well that she has no claim upon it.

In the same way, it is possible for you to live a successful and fully engaged life without being too attached to the specific external details. Whether you like, love, dislike, or try to change the details of your life, you can still experience spiritual freedom from the burdens that come with feeling too much attachment to things.

### Consider

The key to this inner freedom is to look at life with a spiritual awareness that extends beyond your individual temporary circumstances.

Having the peaceful equanimity that comes when you're free from excessive attachments to things of this world doesn't mean that you lose interest in the events and responsibilities of your life, but that

- You ride the waves of life without being drawn underwater by the lows or getting overly elated by the highs.
- You stay inwardly peaceful even while dealing with urgent tasks.
- You remember the eternal nature even in the midst of time deadlines.
- You attain steadiness and contentment – qualities that are great friends for your spiritual journey.
- You remain free from the anxiety of needing to have everything be exactly as you think it should be.
- You act, strive, live, and give whole-heartedly while remembering that your greatest riches exist beyond the physical world.

### Be Careful

Enjoying everything in your life is great, but getting overly attached to those things is not so great.

## Rising above limited desires

How can you get off this roller-coaster ride of wanting and getting, wanting more and getting more — being disappointed and then relieved; happy and then sad? In answering this question, spiritual sages of many traditions have advised people to do the following:

- Remember the temporary nature of life.
- Loosen your focus on materialistic desires.
- Remember the underlying, imperishable, divine current that eternally flows behind, beyond, and within this topsy-turvy, ever-changing, undependable world.

A 7<sup>th</sup> century poet-philosopher from India named Bhartrihari wrote a famous treatise called “The hundred verses on renunciation.” In this section, Bhartrihari describes how attachment turns even blessings into fears:

*With enjoyment, comes fear of disease*

*With social position, fear of disfavor*

*With riches, fear of hostile people*

*With honor, fear of humiliation*

*With power, fear of enemies*

*With beauty, fear of old age*

*With scholarship, fear of challengers*

*With virtue, fear of traducers*

*With the identification with body, fear of death*

*Everything in this world is done with fear*

*Renunciation alone makes one fearless.*

### Don't Forget

Renunciation doesn't just mean to renounce things, but to renounce your attachment to things.