

Satsang with Sri Swami Tattvavidananda Saraswati
Arsha Vidya Gurukulam
The Essentials of Hindu Dharma - 5

Question

I would now like to turn to a common human experience of unhappiness and also deep sorrow. One asks the question why it is so and what can one do to alleviate suffering in one's life?

Answer

Let me tell you that in Hindu philosophy, we look at this issue of human suffering in a very unique and characteristic way. We maintain that a person suffers not because of external situations or circumstances, not because of something other people have done or not done to him but because of his own wrong understanding of himself and of the world. In a nutshell, human sorrow is directly caused by human ignorance. Ignorance is the cause of the sorrow. If this premise is accepted, from that acceptance and from that understanding, a process of growth for the individual begins to take place. The individual begins to examine and enquire into his ideas of himself, and of the world and also of the Godhead. A seeker, who clearly understands that his suffering has its origin in ignorance, makes an enquiry into his long-held ideas and then starts to revise his ideas. After all, a man is what his ideas are. It is our false understanding that makes us suffer and the right understanding liberates us from suffering. Therefore, we put a lot of emphasis on the fact that a proper understanding will put an end to all the sufferings in one's life.

Question

Swamiji, we have a few minutes left in our program and I would like to have you give some advice to the viewing audience on if there is one thing that they could do to follow some of the teachings of the Hindu thought, what would that be?

Answer

If I have to give only one advice, I will say as follows: in Hindu *Dharma*, we have a text called the *Bhagvad Gītā*. It is a relatively small text having some 700 verses. And if we subtract the contextual verses which amount to 50 or 60, you are left with some 650 verses which talk of the human nature, the human goals and various disciplines that one may pursue to manifest his inner nature. Thus the entire philosophy of human life is presented in these 650 verses. If anybody thinks that the *Bhagvad Gītā* is a religious text, I submit that it is not so. It is not even a text that is limited to Hindu *Dharma*. It transcends all the limitations of time or geography or history. I sincerely believe that it is the greatest psychological treatise that is ever written in human history. It can help anybody irrespective of his creed, cast, religion or nationality. So every human being should benefit by studying the *Bhagvad Gītā*. In fact, many western scholars have studied the *Gītā*. In America, Emerson, known as the sage of Concord, studied the *Gītā* and benefited from it. In Britain, Thomas Carlyle was a great scholar who studied the *Gītā* and expressed his appreciation. I sincerely feel that every human being, every intelligent person should study the *Gītā* and benefit from it.¹

¹ This transcript is based on Swami Tattvavidanandaji's TV interview in California with Mr. Vijay Kapoor. Transcribed and edited by Mohan Bhujle.