

RENUNCIATION

The king asked the minister, "What is renunciation? Who is a renunciate?" The minister without batting an eyelid told almost immediately what he knew; he said "a renunciate is one who does not have any desires and attachments." To impress the king further with his thorough knowledge on the subject he continued saying that "as a matter of fact we have many renunciates in our kingdom." Then, said the king, please take me to one such renunciate this coming Sunday.

The minister got bewildered, he did not expect this answer from the king. Just like many adulators and sycophants, the minister's primary work was to please the king. Without thinking he had blurted out something which he deeply regretted. But what to do. He had to find a way to save his face and do something about it.

The minister thought about the situation and just as a cunning mind and insidious mind that such people have he had thought about creating a situation that would save him from his outlandish revelation. He approached a man called Ramu a casual laborer who had a family and was always in need of more money. The minister met Ramu and told him that there is a way that he could get a bag of gold coins for a small favor. Ramu was quite naturally inclined to ask him what he had to do. The minister explained the situation and told Ramu that all he had to do was to dress in ochre color monk's attire and sit under the banyan tree in the corner of the village.

The king and his entourage would come on Sunday and would offer many things and all he had to do was to say "No, I don't desire it and I have no need for it !!" That evening after the show is over the bag of gold coins would be handed over; saying this he gave a token advance to Ramu who was delighted, yet at the same time apprehensive. He asked the minister, "what would happen if things go wrong?" The minister, a very optimistic person said confidently, "trust me, nothing will go wrong."

On the appointed day Ramu was sitting under the banyan tree wearing the Ochre color robes and closed his eyes when he saw the king's entourage coming. Fear gripped him and he sweating inside which his cotton robes absorbed. The king, the queen, the prince, the princess along with the minister and several others arrived. Ramu appeared to be in deep meditation. The king told others to be silent, not to disturb the meditation of the great sage. After a while the sage opened his eyes and saw the king and the entourage.

The king motioned to his minister and the minister brought a lot of colorful precious stones, gold, cash, the king collected the several trays and placed them in front of sage Ramu and prostrated before Ramu. Ramu was wanting to accept all this but then he thought that this is after all a drama and playing his part told, "No king, I don't desire it and I have no need for it." The queen was the next. She brought delightful looking delicacies and bowed before sage Ramu. Ramu's mouth started watering and he had trouble in keeping his mouth shut. Like a trained parrot he said, No, "I don't desire it, I have no need for it."

It was next the prince's turn followed by the princess and then the minister. The minister did not like prostrating to the newly appointed sage Ramu !! However he prostrated and slowly the entourage started going back to the palace. Although everything around Ramu remained the same something within Ramu changed. In the evening the gleeful minister appeared in front of Ramu and handed over to him the bag of gold coins as promised. Ramu refused to accept it and said, No, "I don't desire it, I have no need for it !!" The minister told Ramu, "Cut the crap, the show is over !!"

No, said Ramu in all his realization after the turn of events and a long reflection after that. He told that just by "acting like a renunciate" I could get so much of reverence and respect from a king and

his entire clan, just think what would be the case if I really turn into a renunciate. Saying this he blatantly refused to accept the bag of gold coins leaving the minister speechless !!

Is Ramu a renunciate? In this context it's Yes but not quite. It was a good start. One does not become a renunciate by choice. It's a natural progression... an egg does not become a chick overnight, similarly a pupa does not become a butterfly overnight.

So, what is renunciation? Is it just shunning away from materials and worldly possessions and running into a forest and hiding in a cave or wearing an ochre color robe or a frock, or sporting a beard or growing hair on the head or having marks on the forehead does one become a renunciate? The answer is no. So who is a renunciate?

The Bhagavad Gita says that action is always better than inaction. Lord Krishna also says to Arjuna that although samnyasa (a renunciate) a person who abstains from action and a Karma yogi who does all the works in a selfless manner surrendering the fruits of his action to God, is any day nobler. So running into the forest, abandoning the family, and running away from problems is not renunciation, that is not spirituality. That is not Arjuna's dharma (Arjuna is a kshatriya who has fought and killed many in wars) – Krishna advises Arjuna when Arjuna said that he would turn a samnyasa and not fight his own kith and kin.

Does it mean that one should not have wealth, prosperity, business, and luxury. No, it's not so. Anyone can have all the riches but should not get attached' to it. He should be ready to immediately give up, let go of all what they had owned materially without batting an eyelid. Krishna has mentioned 87 times in the Bhagavad Gita about non-attachment. Having said so many times still seeing Arjuna cry when his son dies made Krishna shed a tear that even after passing on the wisdom of the Gita to Arjuna about non-attachment and seeing Arjuna cry made Krishna think that he had failed as a teacher. Arjuna had not mastered renunciation fully.

King Janaka was an exemplary renunciate who was a raja as well as a rishi. He lived in opulence but what differentiated him from many are that he was totally detached from all of this material.

A story to make it clear... the king invited a monk who was a renunciate and practicing austerities in a forest to come and stay with him in the royal palace for a month. The monk agreed and spent the month with the king. The king told the monk after a month, "I was just testing you about your attachment of life in opulence." "You have got hooked, right?" The sage smiled excused himself for 5 minutes, went inside and he was back in his robes and kamandalam and told the king, "No king, iam not attached to this opulence. Saying this he walked off to the forest. "It's not the outside stuff" it's my ego that the sage had let go long before. That's true renunciation. It's cultivating mental strength and not to give in under attachment. Samnyasis generally don't stay in one place for more than 3 days !!

Renunciation is like a drop of water on a lotus leaf. It stays without getting attached and anytime ready to fall out.

Renunciation means not grasping, clinging, and craving for sense materials. Swami Vivekananda says, "If we give up our attachment to this little universe of the senses and of the mind, we shall be free immediately.

King Rama was an exemplary example of a person of non-attachment. Prince Rama was going to become the king of Ayodhya and on the day of him becoming the king, Kaikeyi, the stepmother of Rama and the third consort of King Dasharatha who had given her two boons decided to ask Rama that Bharatha be king and Rama going to exile. Rama without batting an eyelid removed the

coronation dress and changed to normal clothes and together with Sita and Lakshmana went to the forest to live there for 14 years. That is non-attachment.

Renunciation means you can have possessions, but not be possessive. Renunciation means renouncing all the bad qualities like ego, lust, craving, greed, jealousy, comparison, and cultivate good qualities like selflessness, living a life with morals and ethics, benevolence, being non-jealous, detached from the results, keeping the mind and senses under our control than otherwise...

Gita can be split as Gi Ta. The reverse is "Ta Gi" which means "Renunciation" which is the central theme of the Gita, Sri Ramakrishna says... "My-ness" is the root of all bondage and the one who has renounced this has truly renounced.

What we as householders who also work in the world outside is to do our best in whatever duty we have to do, the universe will do the rest, in the meantime we need to relax...