

The Unnecessities of Life

Once, Socrates was seen by his friends spending a long time in a market. Knowing his frugal nature, they teased him, "Even you have started dreaming about shopping." Socrates soberly replied, "I was observing all the unnecessary things that people buy."



Shopping has always been an irrational fashion, but, in our modern world of hi-tech and glamorous advertising, it has become an obsession. Acquiring new things gives some pleasure, but sadly the charm of newness fades soon. What remains thereafter is the burden of maintenance, which demands time, energy, care and money. An exasperated shopping addict stated his predicament poignantly, "Everything I own owns me." People today have tea-set, sofa set, multimedia set – and they are always up-set.

Nevertheless possessiveness retains its almost irresistible fascination. If people have little, they want a lot. And if they have a lot, they want a lot more. Why is the desire for possessions never satisfied?

Because it is our right and nature to have unlimited possessions by possessing the possessor of all possessions – God, Krishna.

As spiritual beings, souls, the eternal children of God, our deepest need is the security and satisfaction that accompanies the devotional remembrance of our all-powerful, all-loving Father. Just as a fish becomes restless as soon as it is out of water, we become dissatisfied as soon as we forget God. When we make God the wealth of our heart by chanting his holy names, then we become enlightened to use the wealth of the world to benefit ourselves and others.

Many people today feel that they have no time for God. But what makes them so busy? It is their own self-created pursuit of the unnecessities of life, which they imagine to be necessities. Srila Prabhupada, the founder of ISKCON, succinctly summarizes this tragic entrapment, "If our endeavor is not to enquire about the Absolute Truth, we will simply increase our endeavor to satisfy our artificial needs."

Endeavor we must, but for what? For worldly possessions that will keep us forever dissatisfied or devotional possession that will make us forever satisfied?

The decision rests with us. ❧