



Transcend greed by internal enrichment

During his inaugural address, United States President Obama identified greed as a major cause for the current recession. Whose greed? It's easy to point the finger at mortgage brokers. Certainly they were greedy; but how much harm they alone could have done? They capitalised on the greed of the ordinary people for unaffordable homes. If we are honest with ourselves and if we want to solve the problem, we have to point the finger at ourselves.

Concealing the harms of greed is a deep-rooted misconception, "Life is exciting and enjoyable only when one's income and lifestyle are improving constantly." The Bhagavad-Gita (16.13-15) cautions that this materialistic conception is fertile breeding ground for indiscriminate greed. Those infected by greed sacrifice integrity and intelligence on the altar of wealth. Their irresponsible financial choices snowball into crises - individually, nationally and globally. Studies show that if we want to curb greed and gain, spirituality is the best way. A research by Michael McCullough (*Psychological Bulletin*, January 2009) said: Research shows that religious belief and piety promote self-control. In the 1920s, researchers found that students who spent more time in Sunday school did better at laboratory tests measuring self-discipline. Later studies rated devout children relatively low in impulsiveness by parents and teachers, and that religiosity repeatedly correlated with higher self-control among adults.

The New York Times (December 31, 2008) article 'For Good Self-Control, Try Getting Religious About It' by John Tierney, which reported these findings, implied a suggestion. The one new-year resolution, which will empower us to stick to all our other resolutions, is the resolution to increase our religious commitment. Vedic texts explain that, as spiritual beings, we innately long for spiritual wealth: the loving, comforting, empowering presence of the divine in our hearts. We become dissatisfied when we lose awareness of the divine presence. The soul longing for the divine cannot be satisfied by material pleasures and products. So, the real cure for greed is to cultivate internal possessiveness. When we commit ourselves to meditation, yoga, prayer and the chanting of holy names, the scripturally recommended process for self-enrichment, we will become enriched by the presence of god. Once we are internally fulfilled, greed will never be able to victimise us.

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