

It is the best sometimes, it is the worst most times. Time and time again, we have too little of it. It flies too quickly. A conflict that *seems* to exist in the lives of many today? Time – the lack of it.

We all seem to face “the crunch” and many of us have become so busy, that we don’t stop to notice and enjoy simple things in life. Instead, we rush through our daily lives in order to get to the next day, where we do the same. With rampant multitasking to manage the crazy workloads, the focus of our attention usually lies in the past or future. Instead of chanting the Lord’s name, “Hari Hari”, we chant “hurry, hurry.” We spend our time repeating phrases like “time flies,” “time is everything,” “time is money,” and “we’re short on time,” as if they were mantras. In fact, the ‘checklist phenomenon’ describes living certain stages of life for many. Take the competitive high school student, for example. Going through high school and getting into college involves jumping through a series of hoops, making sure to complete an extensive list of extracurricular activities, achieve high test scores, take challenging classes etc. The entire process becomes essentially an exercise in completing a checklist with little importance on enjoying the tasks on it.

A constant race-like attitude, coupled with the plethora of electronic devices, which aid our ‘competition’ against time, has blinded many from living in the moment and performing daily actions with intent, sincerity, and focus. This tendency to hurry and act insincerely is the real conflict that is degrading our quality and purpose of life.

This begs the question: Why do we run through life as it were a race, or rather, a marathon? The finish line is death anyway. What does the first person to the finish line achieve? Are the overbooked weeks and skipped lunches a sacrifice to gain fortune and fame? Or is it to feel a sense of ephemeral self-satisfaction, having completed a great amount of work at the end of the day? Since all fame and fortune are ultimately worthless, once the soul leaves the human body for the next life, what is the need to rush through life?

Perhaps, the materialistic, modern, money-driven world has so strongly influenced our mindset that we have lost focus of the goal in life. While western society would claim that making money and building a reputation are most essential for satisfaction in life, without a sense of contentment and happiness or wellbeing to enjoy that money or name, all efforts are in vain. Additionally, without any sort of growth of the spiritual inner being, one’s life is essentially futile.

A study of the Bhagavad Gita provides profound insight on how we may live a better quality of life and progress on our spiritual paths, the only meaningful and long-lasting progress. The root of the tendency to lead overwhelming lives is the desire for the reward of the actions we perform. We are constantly focused on the consequences of an action and give little thought to actually performing the action.

The Gita explicitly states that we should refrain from performing “action(s) motivated from the desire of reward” (2.47). Krishna further urges Arjuna to “perform [his] activities giving up attachment and become equipoised in both success and failure”(2.48).” Detaching oneself from the fruits of the action not only have a liberating effect on the doer, but also implies that performing the action should be the main focus of the action. While this may seem redundant, its nuances are better seen in an example.

Before coming across the verse, while walking to class from the train station everyday, I constantly checked my watch, concerned that I would be late. Hurriedly walking to compensate for the delayed train, my mind revisited the late train and annoyance brewed. In ruminating the past occurrence and the possible future consequence, I completely zoned out the experience of walking across the beautiful campus. After reading this verse, I changed my behavior to better live the experience of simply walking. I began conscientiously noting my surroundings, hearing the birds chirp on the green trees, feeling the morning breeze, and breathing in the crisp air. I made sure to clear my mind of the train and take in the full experience of walking – feel my body take each step and smile. Since the future was out of my control anyway, giving up my fake sense of control over the situation was not only liberating, but allowed me to live the moment I was in. I let go of the bonds (and worries) of time and simply existed *in time*. By placing emphasis on focusing on the actions we perform, one may perform them more efficiently, with greater effect, and enjoy them as well. Perhaps, this intention will lead to a less hurried approach to life. Acting with detachment will also allow us to better prioritize our duties and thereby make better use of our time. It will eliminate many of our desires and perhaps better put into focus our purpose in life.

The Gita tells us that the only escape from never-ending cycles of suffering is finding unity with the ‘Ultimate Consciousness’. Working toward the goal of finding eternal unity, instead of solely ‘name and fame’, may alleviate much of stress and pressure we feel from the need to excel in this world. Meticulous recognition of this reality will certainly lift the limits of time felt regularly in our lives.

Small changes in our lives can inch us forward to the mindful and detached action that Krishna preaches. This will eliminate the supposed conflict that we face with time. That way, time can be lived, instead of passed. Time can be enjoyed instead of scrambled for. Mindful practice of detached, focused action will lead the hurried and harried individual to see an expanse of time waiting to be used for spiritual unity.