

# [The common tendency always to long for](https://assignbuster.com/the-common-tendency-always-to-long-for/)

The possibility of remaining discon­tented in spite of success and prosperity arises from the insatiable nature of our desires, and the common tendency always to long for something better than our present condition. What is out of our reach seems valuable till we get it, and when possessed loses its value, so that it is natural for us to be always dissatisfied. This is unfortunately the character of most men. There are, however, some happily constituted persons who are by nature endowed with a contented frame of mind.

It is also possible to cultivate a spirit of contentment. As discontent is nourished by the habit of comparing ourselves with our more fortunate neighbors, and thinking of the desirable things we have not got, those who wish to be contented should by an effort of will think of the blessings they enjoy and compare themselves rather with those who are less fortunate than themselves. Hardly any one in the world is so unfortunate as not to have many good things to be thankful for. Although a man may be very poor, he may be blessed with good health and enjoy the society of conge­nial friends. Another man is stationed in a lonely situation where he has no one to associate with, but perhaps he has a taste for reading, and is thereby able to enjoy the companionship of the great writers of all ages. The man who considers himself over­worked should remember that he would be much more inclined to be miserable if he had nothing to do. Even those who are afflicted by ill-health, the greatest of all sources of unhappiness, can often console themselves with the thought of the sympathy and kindness they have received from friends and relations, the depth of whose affections would never have been revealed to them had they been strong and well.

There is also one source of satisfaction which is entirely independent of fortune, namely, the satisfaction of having always tried to do what is right. Fortune may deprive us of wealth, reputation, friends and health, but cannot force us to disobey our conscience; so that whatever blows evil destiny may inflict upon us, it is always possible to provide for ourselves the deep satis­faction that follows from the fulfillment of duty. This kind of sat­isfaction is not only attainable by everybody, but also nobler than any other. For it must be remembered that all contentment is not equally worthy, and that sometimes discontent is preferable to tenement. As a rule, contentment should be aimed at, because it is the surest way of obtaining happiness.

But there are circum­stances under which it is right to refuse to be contented and happy. It is blameworthy to be contented to regulate our conduct in life by a low ideal, and to know the better course and follow the worse. It is blameworthy to consent to remain ignorant when we might obtain knowledge. The great fault of the Irish peasantry is want of a proper feeling of discontent. Their standard of com­fort is so low that they make no strenuous effort to better their condition and provide themselves and their families with better houses and clothes. The same fault may be found with the peas­antry of India, who are contented with wages too small to enable them to bring up their families in health and comfort. While discontent occasioned by the greater prosperity of oth­ers is base envy, a similar feeling produced by the contemplation of the misery of others is the surest sign of a benevolent nature.

It was this noble kind of discontent that moved Howard to devote his life to the amelioration of the condition of prisoners, and made it impossible for Buddha to live happily in his father’s palace.