Pursuit Of Happiness

Obedience is the first means of achieving success and happiness. All jiva-s are always in pursuit of happiness. An interesting quote from a philosopher outlines what we must do for happiness.

If you want to be happy for …

- One hour – Take a nap
- One day – Engage in a sport of your choice (e.g. fishing)
- One month – Get married
- One year – Find treasure (e.g. win a lottery)
- Lifelong – Make someone else happy

For eternal happiness, Know Thyself. Know your blissful Self, you yourself are Ananda Swaroop. This is the crux of pursuit of happiness.

An hour, a day, a month, a year – it’s not the time period or the means that is indicated. What is meant is that the real source of happiness is making others happy and knowing your blissful Self. Everything else can no doubt give you happiness – sleep will give you happiness as will any sports or marriage. It’s not the question of an hour; people sleep for 24 hours too. That’s not the point. Point is for a limited time period this activity can give happiness, but real happiness is something different. That’s what we have to analyze.

Inherent Contradiction

All of us seek happiness and we want to be happy. But our happiness is always dependent on objects, beings and places. IF I get such-n-such a thing or IF a particular thing happens in my life, or IF I become this-n-this, THEN I will be happy. Let’s analyze a few things here. Do we want happiness now, or in future? We all want happiness now, and want it to be forever. There is an inherent contradiction here. I want happiness and I want it now, in the present moment. But I always say IF such a thing happens, or IF I go somewhere, IF I will be happy. So our happiness is always projected in the future.

Simply stated, our happiness is never in the action but in the result of an action; and that too a particular result. Every action will produce a particular result, but here I put a condition – I will be happy only if it produces such-n-such a conditional result. So happiness is always in future, even though I want to be happy now. What a contradiction!
Fear of the Uncertain Future

Another thing, future is always uncertain. We are always worried about not knowing what is going to happen in future. People of course come to us to predict future, and I always tell them on the one certain thing to happen – either it is what you are expecting or what you are not expecting! That is the only truth, it is uncertain. So if my happiness is in the result; and result is in the future; and future is uncertain; then my happiness is uncertain. Moreover, even if I get happiness, it’s not going to remain there. That’s why even when happiness comes around we are worried because we don’t know how long it will last. So again there is fear. Is that real happiness?

Joy in the Present Action

So in pursuit of happiness, instead of depending on result of an action, you enjoy the action itself. Action can be performed only in the present, not in the past or not in the future. If I enjoy performing that action, then my happiness is in present time. The word “present” is also very good, not because we get presents on our birthday; but because present time is a gift to us from God. We must realize it’s value. Enjoy whatever action you are doing – cleaning, sweeping, etc.. One sweeper lady was working in the hospital and she would always be humming, singing while cleaning. A patient asked her “You always seem to be very happy. Your job is only sweeping and cleaning, so how do you manage to be so joyful?” She replied, “I have to do my job anyway. If I go on complaining and grumbling about my work all the time, would it not become a pain? So I enjoy and I sing.” It is simple, if you grumble, then you crumble or tumble.

Something is bound to happen all the time, so enjoy each moment unconditionally. Action can always be performed only in the present. Joy is there in every action. You wake up in the morning and there is so much joy in opening eyes. Suppose your eyes don’t open? You’ll get so worried! But when you open your eyes, you find that you are alive. When I open my eyes, or when I can hear something - don’t complain about sounds; hearing reaffirms that our ears are functioning.

One Balavihar child sitting in the back wasn’t paying any attention to the teacher. But he was giggling only by tickling sole of his foot. He was tickling himself and laughing. He didn’t need anything more than tickling. Just a little and he was happy. For example, if you are sitting for three hours, you will find so much joy in just getting up. It’s a relief if you get to sit after standing for a long time. We seem to have forgotten simple things that make us happy and keep on putting conditions on our state of happiness. When I go there, I will be happy. Some people aren’t happy in this world, they will be happy only in heaven!
Secret of Happiness

We always prepare for happiness, or we pretend to be happy. When we finally get something we've wanted for a long time, other people are curious to find out about our happiness. “You were craving for it for a long time, are you happy now that you have acquired it?” they ask. You feel compelled to say yes, sometimes reluctantly. You have to say yes!

One secret of happiness is to learn to enjoy the *karma* (action). Enjoy the action itself; discover the joy in every little thing. Even the opening of eyes, listening to something, ability to see, touch, hear, feel, everything is so wonderful. There is really nothing to complain. There is a benefit in everything - even in being bald. No oiling or combing of hair is required. If someone comes to meet him, he isn’t bothered about hair and all the other things. Someone asked a 103-year old lady “What is the benefit of being 103 years old?” “There is no peer pressure” she replied!

Enjoy whatever state is there, enjoy even in illness and sickness. You realize the value of good health only in sickness. At least that’s the time everyone inquires about your health. Otherwise no one bothers. If you usually ask someone for a glass of water, they get upset and retaliate by asking you if you are paralyzed to get it yourself. But if you aren’t well, the will come and specially ask you politely if they can get you water.

Secondly, think a little more. What is happiness? If our happiness is dependent on something, then we are always in trouble. Real source of happiness is *in spite of*, not *because of* something. If the cause of happiness is impermanent, happiness doesn’t always remain with us. Moment you attribute happiness to a cause; it becomes a cause of sorrow. So I am creating a cause of sorrow. I cannot always get what I want, so learn to want and enjoy what you get. Then you are happy with whatever you get. Tell yourself “That’s what I wanted, it is so wonderful.” Then you will always be happy.

Definition of Happiness

Now again, what is happiness? Bhagwan gives a beautiful definition and makes a point in Bhagavad Gita. *Prasadey Sarva dukhanaam haanirasyopjaayete.* *Prasadey* means *Prasannata*, cheerfulness. There are many meanings to this, but true happiness is that where there is an end of sorrow. All pleasures and comforts we enjoy in our life give us happiness. For example, when you eat good food etc., you get happiness and joy. Question still remains – does that end our sorrow? True happiness is that which puts an end to our sorrow, our grief, and our fears. It must bring peace and bliss in our mind. All pursuits give us the former – momentary thrill of chilling, but we experience hangover later on. Engaging in an activity is okay for some time, but later it tires us. There is fear, restlessness, agitations that don’t go away. Mind remains disturbed due to all this.
Happiness is that which ends sorrow, and removes grief. As long as it is dependent on something, it is not true happiness that we abide in.

Source of Happiness

What is the source of happiness? Discover it in *karma* (action) itself. Happiness is what you get, not what you desire. With reference to “I” and the “world”, we seek happiness in the world of objects, emotions, thoughts, positions, etc. These sources of happiness are all in temporary joy and satisfaction, but they are not abiding in true permanent happiness. Mind wanders from sublime to ridiculous things in not time. You may be meditating one moment, and the next moment you are thinking of coffee!

World can only be a source of comfort, not of happiness. When the world goes away, only “I” remain. This “I” is not the body. The body is incapable of giving happiness; in fact, it is a source of a lot of trouble. So the question still remains, what is “I”? Bhagwan gives a clue – Happiness is not *because* of something, but you are happy without anything. Experience it, because it is universally available. Deep sleep, even animals have that experience. In deep sleep we are happy, and we aren’t even engaged in anything. There is no *shabda, rasa, roop, gandha* – no thought or relations. Everything drops. So where am I experiencing that happiness?

The body and mind is at rest. We are ignorant of that source, it is not because of anything, but it is your own true self. Know Thyself for true happiness. No perception, no emotion, no desire is required for experiencing happiness. Bhagavad Gita says

_PrajaHAti yadA kAmAn sarwAn pArtha manogatAn._
_Atmani ewa AtmanA tushtah sthitaprajnah tadA uchyate ||2.55||_

When a person is totally content in the Self, by the Self, all desires are dropped. He is called a man of wisdom or enlightenment. That is our own nature. Unfortunately we’ve needlessly made the pursuit of happiness so expensive. Someone once said we buy things that we don’t need with the money we don’t have, to impress the people we don’t like! We unnecessarily complicate life. All worldly pleasures exhaust and fire us. We feel like dropping everything. I don’t want to read, listen or watch anything and neither do I need anyone. That is the source of happiness, your Self that you are.

Practical Tips for Happiness

1. Pursuit ends or is fulfilled with discovery of our true self.
2. Discover happiness in the action itself.
3. Enjoy whatever you get.
Bhagavad Gita (Chapter 5) explains to us how to be happy. Who is a man of happiness?

\begin{align*}
\text{saknotihaiva yah} \\
\text{prak sarira-vimokshanat} \\
\text{kama-krodhodbhavam vegam} \\
\text{sa yuktaḥ sa sukhi narah}\ | | 5.23 | |
\end{align*}

That person who is integrated is happy. He who is able to withstand the onslaught or force of desire, passion, anger while being in the world is a happy person. Saknoti (able); iha (here); sodhum (stand); kama-krodhodbhavam vegam (storm of passion or anger arising in the mind.) The one who can withstand that and not get carried away by the force of the storm, such a person can be happy;

Prak sarira-vimokshanat – prior to your death. It’s not after I die and conquer the storm after death. How will you reach there if you’ve not conquered anger etc.? What is the guarantee you will reach there? Although we give benefit to every departed soul, that s/he attained heavenly abode, but we don’t know that. Why doubt it? Some say by death, and death may come any moment. Nobody knows. Everybody who is born is sure to die. But the exact moment of death is a suspense. When will it come? No one knows for sure. Any moment can be the last moment. If we can conquer moment of when passion, lust, anger or desires arise, everyone says “I know I should not get angry, but we can’t conquer the moment. You can be happy if you can in fact conquer the moment of temptation or when anger arises. Eliminate disaster, experience shanty (peace).

One angry man was described by his wife as temperamental – 50% temper, 50% mental. Imagine such a person who throws a fit when tasting salty breakfast. His anger spills over in his interactions and now the moods at both home and office are spoiled. On the other hand, another man makes light of the salty breakfast situation and teases his wife “Has your father started a salt factory?” Soon she realizes that the food was assaulted with salt and does everything to ensure that the food salt level is perfect for everything from that point onwards. She has pleasant thoughts of her husband, and the food gets tasted prior to serving.

If you maintain peace, there is so much tranquility for everyone. We are mostly swept away with storm of passion and rage of anger. Every moment something is happening. We get upset and annoyed even if we have no reason to be angry. Sa yuktaḥ (that person is yukta) sa sukti narah (is a happy person). This is a basic translation. Actually the force of that sloka is even more powerful. He who is integrated and is happy, only that person is worthy of being called a man. It’s true. When we get angry we don’t look like humans anymore. We look worse than animals, almost like devils. That’s why even photographers always remind you to smile prior to clicking your photo. No one wants grumpy angry photos!
Discover Happiness

Seek and discover happiness from spiritual standpoint and from practical standpoint. Make someone else happy. If we pick up a quarrel and make everyone unhappy, how will I be happy? We find so many types of abuses -physical, mental, verbal. How can I be happy if I am an abuser? We have seen the rise and fall of so many dictators who were pulled down from their positions. Why are they no more in power? Because they looted and persecuted their own subjects for their happiness, it is not possible for them to be happy. Moment you look at someone as different from you, or cause them sorrow, you’ve created an enemy already. There won’t be any problems if you see them as your own self. If that man prospers, you will take delight in their prosperity. Else jealousy will pull them down. That is not the smartest way or the right way of living.

If you are happy in their happiness or making the happy, you don’t to be rich, prosperous, wealthy, or any such thing to make them happy. Just an affectionate look is enough. Dekho magar pyaar se – look, but affectionately. Don’t be angry. It’s a part of the game! Why give angry looks, for example, while overtaking another car – when ensure that our mean glance reaches the other drivers. And then there are other drivers who ensure that their glance conveys their challenge to us to overtake their cars if we dare to do it!

Learn to look affectionately and speak lovingly. For example if you are unable to contribute when people come to ask you for donations, explain to them nicely “Today I can’t give you; or I can give only $x.xx amount.” Avoid barking at the person soliciting the donation “Am I going to sell myself and give you the money?” Priya-vAkya-pradAnena sarvE tushanti jantavah ... All living beings feel happy by hearing pleasant words. So, only pleasant words should be uttered. If you speak softly, even plants and animals feel it. To give happiness you don’t need a lot of money, you just need to be a loving person. There are wonderful simple ways and means for us to be happy. No one can make us unhappy, even God will fail to make us unhappy. “Dukhi hota hi nahi! I gave him all sorrows and troubles and still he loves me. What can you do? Mein to haar gaya - I have lost, and I accept defeat.” This is called pursuit of happiness.

Last but not the least, just love god. Where love is, there peace is. Where peace is, there is happiness and bliss. Our hearts have dried up, hence that is a problem. Love of wealth hast taken away wealth of love from our hearts. Love is so simple. We don’t need anything special. No material richness or academic degree holders are required. Be rich in that love that we have to be.

Let’s now rejoice in song of love.

Om Tat Sat