

Happiness on the Run

2/10/08

"If we'd only stop trying to be happy, we'd have a pretty good time"- Edith Wharton

To run after happiness or the quest for happiness is the biggest farce of the human race, for the simple fact that the duration of our so called happiness does not last long. It comes and goes and to prolong it is like chasing the ever receding horizon. It is elusive as the wind, it is flirtatious as can be, it touches you and passes on.

Happiness is polarized and therefore all those who run after happiness, remain exposed to the opposite pole i.e. Unhappiness.

Those who bank on happiness out of compulsive and mundane desires are vulnerable to become spiritually bankrupt.

"When a man thinks of the objects, attachment to the object arises. From attachment desire is born. From desire anger arises." Verse 62

"From anger comes delusion, from delusion loss of memory, from loss of memory destruction of discrimination. From destruction of discrimination he perishes." Verse 63 ; Chapter 2 :Bhagavad Gita

The word "Happiness" is the most flagrantly and colloquially used word. Interpretations differ! Some associate Happiness with the present moment of contentment, some projecting the future, some with calmness, some with jubilation, some with rapture or ecstasy and some with satisfaction.

The reasons for being in a state of happiness are many as you can find. Some express happiness when in a satisfactory condition of wealth, others of health, or for power or fame and by large when a desire is fulfilled and also when certain conditions of security are met short term or long term. But when such conditions are reversed or desires unfulfilled we sink into anger and unhappiness in a flash of a second.

On a sincere assessment and to achieve a sense of demarcation from other synonymous words, you will observe that happiness is a hype, an excitement, like jumping towards a peak, an elation towards euphoria, a celebrative mood adorned by natural smiles or laughter. Such expressions are all transient. Is it really possible to be in such a state all 24 hours and on and on? If such be the case nobody will really be able to ascertain the meaning of happiness. A contrast is needed.

At the slightest provocation or upon hearing some sad news, we can slip into unhappiness. Mankind is always in this limbo moving from happiness to unhappiness as a pendulum and at times remaining in between, in a more or less a neutral but restless zone.

So how does one define Unhappiness?

The safest known definition is when we respond to given situations with a negative or agitating emotional response. Responses laden with anger, fear or envy, jealousy, hatred that makes one's mind disturbed or turbulent for a certain duration of time.

So as a ball park, happiness and unhappiness comes and goes as an illusion depending upon your attachments, desires and expectations, ideologies and or beliefs, likes and dislikes and your emotional frame work.

As a meager illustration, your new cherished car has just been delivered to you and you feel exhilarated (happy). The next day you find your car scratched on the side and unhappiness galore!

If you are attached to the stock market, if it rises you are happy but if you have short sold than you are unhappy.

It is said that Buddha used to say many a times: "There is happiness in meeting those you love, and unhappiness in being separated from them, also there is unhappiness in meeting those you dislike and happiness in getting away from them.

Both conditions are of the same, in the same proportion. Happiness is a tension in the mind created by the things you like. Unhappiness in the mind created by the things you dislike."

As we can see that the pursuit of happiness is an outward journey. It is related to desire and its related activities. It is related to the possession of objects and relations. It is in short, related to the other! Somebody has to be around or something has to happen! Somebody fans your ego and you feel happy, somebody condemns you and you feel very unhappy.

If the outward situation is synchronized or meets with your inner environment, you feel happy but if not and you find yourself criticizing, complaining and unhappy.

So now what are we trying to convey here? Is happiness to be avoided?

No not at all. When happiness comes, enjoy the moments and when it goes don't be bothered. The idea is not to run after it.

Primarily one must learn to become receptive so that you can cherish moments of happiness as long as it lasts. Not all happiness is an outcome of expectations and desires! There are moments while looking at the starry sky, the full moon in its splendor, the crimson sunset, listening to the chirping of birds, some music, some jokes, funny expressions of individuals, etc you do feel a sense of happiness.

The most important aspect of life is not to allow oneself to fall into the pits of unhappiness or depression (prolonged unhappiness) by vigilant introspection and creative engagements. Mankind has a tendency to find more reasons to be unhappy than happy. This you can see that majority of us are always complaining, blaming, backbiting and justifying our unhappy conditions.

So the conclusion here is that instead of running after happiness one must aspire for peace as one of the most tangible pillar of life. This path is an inward pilgrimage and it can be only acquired from within.

"A political victory, a rise in rents, the recovery of your sick, or return of your absent friend, or some other external events, raises your spirits and you think good days are preparing for you, do not believe it.

Nothing can bring you peace but yourself. Nothing can bring you peace but the triumph of principles."

- Ralph Waldo Emerson.

So then what does Peace mean to us?

Two words amply describe Peace. One is calmness and the other is stillness. Stillness implies temporary cessation of mental activity supported with the complete withdrawal of the senses or when your sense faculties are in deep slumber. This stillness can be experienced in deep meditation and even a lightning glimpse can be profoundly and a thrilling experience.

After meditation or the practice of meditational techniques, when one wakes up to the world of senses, you do experience a higher level of calmness.

Calmness can be also felt without any practices, but such calmness can be more easily shattered, if the calmness has not acquired a high degree of depth.

Now let us together conduct and experiment in introspection. Ask yourself if you are happy or unhappy the way it has been described. If neither then your answer in all probability will be "I am peaceful". Now ask yourself honestly is this condition of yours really peaceful?

Now imagine the waves of your mind to the waves of the sea. At times the sea appears very calm when the gentle waves caress the longing shores with a certain rhythm. It is soothing and appears calm but underneath there is gentle undercurrent of restlessness. Perhaps this is what you feel.

At the slightest provocation or stimulation you can become more restless.

If you will observe keenly that most of us operate from a band or zone of restlessness, (low, medium and high). We then seek to occupy or engage ourselves in diverse activities, passing time or keeping busy as we all say. But when disengaged from any particular activity again you encounter some restlessness which again propels you into some other activity and many a times to avoid feelings of boredom, frustrations or loneliness. All such mental and physical engagements pause in fatigue and finally sleep.

From this zone of restlessness, you can either jump into happiness, or sink into unhappiness or remain in this zone of variable restlessness with occasional periods of relaxation. This is the general condition of humanity.

Now the problem with all kinds of activities that are propelled from this restless zone is the aspect of anxiety, hurry and worry which contribute to stress in the mind and tension in the body.

This tension is the greatest malady of life and according to Yoga, tension is the mother of all psychosomatic diseases.

So our journey in a practical sense is to attain peace that implies in shifting of all our activities and our responses from the zone of restlessness to the base of restfulness, devoid of any anxiety. This is the attainment of peace.

When a Buddha walks or a Christ talks, they do so from the base of restfulness.

But when we do the same things there is an element of restlessness and undue tension in our muscles. When a Buddha walks it appears that he is floating, but with most of us it is like a struggle. When a Christ speaks there is a spiritual melody, but when we speak mostly discord or with words puffed with one's vanity or arrogance.

If you can recognize this aspect in your life than the next question will be from where does all this restlessness arise?

The answer is that it arises from the lower part of our subconscious mind where all our instincts, complexes, phobias, emotions, suppressed desires are all entrenched. These are the factors that create undercurrents that reach our objective consciousness.

In actuality these are subtle signals from the deep that is constantly saying to us “Hey! Come in and check things out for yourself”.

But do we ever listen? Even our body talks! But we never pay attention, and therefore our bodies become prone to sickness and disease. We have forgotten to listen to the promptings of our bodies and the whisperings of our soul, busy chasing the American dream of “Get rich quick.” Until the dream does not become the American nightmare we remain engrossed and negligent of this subtle attribute of listening.

As an analogy our subconscious mind is like a minefield with an assortment of explosives hidden under the surface.

So what does one do when an explosive is found? : Disconnect! Diffuse!

In the same way all our rogue thoughts are like explosives, which means heavily charged with emotions or feelings of anger, hatred, fears, guilt, jealousy, envy and galore that explode in us when triggered by our memories or circumstances.

The process of disconnecting these emotions and neutralize the thought wave is called Desensitization in psychological terms and is also one of the fundamentals tools of Yoga. Please do read about this subject on your own.

You can only detect these hidden explosives and all the dross in the mind by applying meditational techniques and bring the mind to a level of peace and also by developing a high state of awareness. When this happens you will know and will not need to refer to a book or someone else to verify.

This is where the pursuit and practices of Raja Yoga, Hatha yoga, Kriya Yoga and Japa Yoga come to the rescue in all its ancient glory and glamour.

So unless and until the soil of this part of the subconscious mind is not fully traversed and not cleared of all such explosives, weeds of suppressed desires are not reconciled, and our shallow belief system is not properly de-conditioned, and made fertile with spiritual knowledge, where only the green crops of love can be grown, lush with beauty, Peace remains as elusive as ever and a far away cry.

This process of desensitization is of utmost importance as a stepping stone to the experience of peace and later on the experience of meditation and has to be done most scientifically or the way as prescribed by Yoga.

We must all remember that Peace is not only concerned with the matter of subduing the random or the

parade of thoughts on the surface of our minds but also concerned with the quality or psychology of thought impressions in our subconscious mind. Both have to be tackled simultaneously. One without the other would be like traveling on a cart with one wheel. Again the precepts of Yoga are of tremendous importance and value.

Conclusively we must first acquire the depth of calmness or in other words build for ourselves a plateau of peace and remain poised in it with two other possibilities to be achieved.

One possibility is to feel the waves of happiness as and when it arises and such waves to gradually subside on the plateau without our mood sinking or permeating into restlessness or unhappiness.

Second is to launch your self from this plateau into the sky of bliss, through rocket of meditation. Look at the word bliss. It has no opposites. It is indescribable orgasmic ecstasy. It is the abode of supreme and permanent relaxation also called Sahaj Samadhi, and this being our final goal.

How to build this plateau of peace?

You will observe as you commence your journey from the one of restlessness to restfulness by the practice of meditational techniques on a regular basis, you will experience a great degree of relaxation.

With this relaxed condition or calmness your intellect will become sharper and steady and you will be able to introspect and contemplate better.

"" In that peace all pains are destroyed, for the intellect of the tranquil minded becomes steady"" Verse 65 Chapter 2; Bhagavad Gita

The sharpening of the intellect will lead you to a better understanding into the nature of things and this will become a cyclic operation. More understanding, more peace and then you will concur with Helen Keller who quotes:

"I do not want that peace that passeth understanding but the understanding that bringeth peace".

Meanwhile there will be a pull from the restless zone and back again to the restful zone. Another pendulum story! Until a time comes when your intellect, understanding, peace has acquired such depth, that the question of restlessness does not arise. The plateau of peace is then built with depth.

So again another question will come forth! Why is peace so important or conducive to higher stages of evolution as compared to Happiness?

Firstly We must be able to ascertain that there is a vibratory scale even for such abstract qualities or attributes. Consciousness has a scale, peace has a scale, bliss has a scale.

Secondly Peace has one more intrinsic aspect and that is bliss and this needs to be deeply understood. If peace was only concerned with calmness or stillness than there would be not much difference between a statue and ourselves.

When peace first dawns, you experience the first rays of bliss at its lowest point of vibration which emanates from the soul itself at its highest level of vibrations.

When peace increases more of bliss is felt until the final culmination of eternal peace or complete peace then absolute or highest bliss is experienced. This kind of growing ecstasy gradually replaces the need for happiness which decreases in proportion as ecstasy increases.

This conclusion or postulate arises from the fact of Buddha's words referring to happiness as a state of tension. We at this stage cannot dispute and give only credence to the enlightened master's words. So when we go inwards in peace, to use words such as perfect happiness or happiness does not make much sense. It is as good as using the words perfect ego or perfect poison.

To exemplify or elaborate, Happiness is a caused phenomenon. If some one asks you, why are you so happy or unhappy as generally happens? Your answer will be "Because of this" Or Because this....."

Happiness is related to the outside. It is mental start to finish, but bliss is transcendental. Bliss is always there radiating from the deepest core. To realize it one has to be receptive or aware in peace.

So peace does not cause bliss for bliss is the very nature of our soul and in the final analysis when the intellect has transcended the senses you simply repose in your own nature of bliss.

In Sanskrit and Vedanta Bliss is referred to as Anand, one of the three attributes of Brahman or God if you would like to call. Osho one of the greatest mystics of the 20th century said: "First comes Truth as you enter in you become aware of your inner reality "SAT". As you go deeper into your reality you become aware of consciousness i.e. All is light and nothing is dark. There is no unawareness.

You realize yourself as flame of consciousness. "CHIT"

When you enter still deeper then the ultimate core is bliss; Anand. And so the words "Sat, Chit, Anand"

To end we must all learn to acquire peace and then live in peace and live it well and share its causes and effects with all in love.

Buddha's last words were "Be a light unto your self"

Dadu humbly adds "First become unfettered and a man of insight,

Shine your character and be so bright

To kindle the flame to be torch and

As a torch bearer to spread the Light"

Loves-Daduzen

Detached heart