

# TRUE HAPPINESS

- *Swami Dasharathananda*

Every living being seeks happiness and tries to avoid pain. Hunger, sleep, fear of death and procreation are common to both animals and human beings. But, man being gifted with superior intelligence and power of introspection tops the evolution table and also dominates other creatures in his struggle to maximize happiness and minimize the pain and suffering.

All our actions are motivated towards the fulfilment of the above-mentioned goals. The history of human civilization and the advancements made in science and technology and other branches of knowledge is an illustration for the man's quest for more happiness. In the Chandogya Upanishad, Sanat Kumara says to Narada: "Every action of man is propelled by the desire for happiness".

Almost, 50 years back the man had set foot on the moon and within a decade man's landing on Mars may become a reality. Today's science fiction is tomorrow's reality. In the last fifty years, we witnessed a grand material progress improving our physical comforts, longevity and security. It is predicted that the amount of technological changes that are going to take place for the next five years is more than what had happened between the years 1900 to 2000. If our happiness is directly proportional to the scientific advancements and social changes that we have brought upon, then our generation should be the happiest one so far in the history and our future generations are going to be happier than us.

But, our day to day experience presents an opposite picture. Though we are able to communicate and exchange information easily with the people on the other side of the globe through social media etc., but are unable to empathize and exchange affectionate feelings with our near and dear leading to more broken families and old age homes. We made remarkable progress in the field of neuroscience, cardiology and other allied sciences but, are unable to control thoughts of anger and hatred leading to an unprecedented increase in violence over the last ten years. The present youth are extremely efficient in handling huge amounts of information and data at an amazing speed through modern electronic devices but, are unable to control negative emotions leading to depression and suicide. The statistical figures for the suicide rate around the globe during the last ten years show us that it is multiplying at an alarming rate. We live in the age of information but, are utterly ignorant about our own personality. We have knowledge but lack wisdom.

Ten years back, selfie deaths are unheard of. Internet addiction and gaming disorder got added to the WHO (World Health Organization) list of addictions. Our per-capita income has increased and proportionately our expenditure towards health care increased due to life-style disorders. Every effort made towards the increase in happiness brought troubles with which we are being afflicted in our daily

life. Even after having innumerable ways to pleasure and also the means to enjoy still, there is the feeling of unhappiness and insecurity. Is true happiness like a mirage an elusive thing?

Our Vedas declare that Bliss or Ananda is our real nature. Then why are we so miserable? The answer also comes from the Vedas: They say that our search for happiness is in the wrong direction, in the outside world, in the world of senses. The search should be turned inward, into one's own heart, where the Universal spirit, the Supreme Lord who is Sat-Chit-Ananda resides. He is the source of infinite bliss. It is here and here alone we can get everlasting happiness to its fullest extent. Chandogya Upanishad says: "Naalpe Sukham asti Bhumaiva Sukham" means there is no happiness in the finite things, happiness is in the Infinite.

Bhagavan Sri Krishna in the Bhagavad Gita reaffirms this fact when He says: "Anityam Asukham Lokam Imampraapya Bhajasavamaam" means having come into this transitory and unhappy world worship Me.

**Anityam** means transitory, that which constantly changes, impermanent in nature. Transitoriness is one of the fundamental principles governing the whole creation. Elements combine and bring an object into existence. With time, they again disassociate, and the created object ceases to exist. To simply put, for everything in this universe along with the date of manufacture, date of expiry is also fixed. This is an indelible law which Bhagavad Gita points out: "Jatasya hi dhruvo mrityuhu dhruvam janma mritasyacha tasmaad apariharye' rthe na tvam shochitum arhasi" (Death is certain for one who is born, and rebirth is inevitable for one who has died. Therefore, you should not lament over the inevitable). Day passes into night and night into day, seasons change weather changes. Our body undergoes six kinds of transformations: Asti (existence in the mother's womb), Jayate (birth), Vardhate (grows), Viparinamate (changes), Apakshiyate (decays) and finally Vinashyate (dies). Good things don't last forever similarly the bad things. The objects which give us happiness at one moment will not stay in the next moment and along with them our happiness also vanishes. A beautiful and fragrant flower becomes a waste within a day.

**Asukham** means unhappiness. Happiness is defined as a state of mind of well being got through the fulfilment of a cherished desire. Whatever pleasure or pain we experience is due to our senses(ear, nose etc.) or our sensory system coming in contact with their respective sense objects. When we get our favourite food we are happy but we cannot enjoy it beyond the stomach capacity and also the quantum of pleasure we get reduces with every morsel. The same food with time becomes stale and loathsome and turns into poison. Both the sense objects and our sensory system are limited in their capacity and cannot deliver continuous happiness. Our desire for happiness is like an abysmal pit(bottom less) how much ever happiness is poured into it never gets filled up. It is like trying to fill the ocean with pebbles. The story of king Yayati who exchanged his old age with youth the of his son to enjoy the pleasures of the world is an apt example of this. After enjoying all the pleasures of the senses to the maximum for a thousand years, Yayati said: 'craving for sense pleasures cannot be eliminated by indulgence but aggravated just as ghee poured into fire increases it'.

It is our common place experience that all that we desire is never fulfilled and there is bound to be a lot of residues. Brooding over them results in attachment and this gives rise to anger. Anger leads to

delusion and delusion clouds the power of discrimination. With the loss of discrimination, man is no better than an animal. An important truth of our life is that most of our problems are own mind's creation. Our mind is a perennial source of problems and desires. If one is solved there are many to pounce on us. As the game of solving the problems and fulfilling the desires goes then suddenly we hear the final whistle and the game comes to an end and death standing near beckoning us to follow Him. The cycle of birth and death rotates. As long as we identify ourselves with the body-mind complex, which is nothing but Maya, the Supreme Lord who is the creator of this inscrutable power called Maya is the only refuge to pull us out.

After describing this world as Anityam and Asukham, Bhagavan Sri Krishna says: 'Bhajasvamaam' means Worship Me. This is a great assurance to humanity because though we are born in this transitory and unhappy world, we are not eternally doomed. There is a way out and it is the worship of the Universal Spirit. This is the path for peace and everlasting happiness. Bhagavan Sri Ramakrishna who is the avatara of this age reminds us of this fact when He says: 'Vishaya Viraag aur Ishvara Anurag' (disinterest in pleasures and love for the God). This is what meant by turning the search for happiness inside, into our heart, the seat of divinity in man. Bhagavan Sri Ramakrishna says: 'in Kaliyuga human beings are Annagatha pranas (dependent on food)' and suggests the path of Bhakti as taught by the sage Narada as the most suitable one.

Narada defines Bhakti as 'Supreme love for God'. For an ordinary man who has many responsibilities to discharge, problems to solve and desires to fulfil this sounds to be an impossible task. How can he become a bhakta overnight? How to develop this love for God. Bhagavan Sri Ramakrishna has the solution. He says: 'One has to approach God assuming a particular attitude towards Him. One must think of Him as one's father or mother or a friend and so forth'. Just as we are free with our own parents and friends sharing our problems, similarly we should pray to the Lord for our needs. He being a Kalpataru grants us all that is good for us. Bhagavan Sri Krishna says: 'Four types of virtuous people approach me: the man who is in distress, seeker of knowledge, seeker of wealth and the Jnani'. All of them are considered noble because some way or other they are connected to God. One should have complete faith and accept Him as the only refuge. He welcomes them all and fulfils their needs accordingly. Unless the lower needs are fulfilled, the higher spiritual need (spiritual awakening) is not felt. This is called Sakama Bhakti. The first three types of approaches as a seeker of wealth, relief from distress and the seeker of knowledge are preparatory movements or steps towards a higher state, that of a Jnani and he is the real bhakta. He doesn't expect any worldly thing from the Lord and is always absorbed in the mesmerising and pure Love of God. The purifying influence of God will raise the bhakta from Sakama Bhakti to Nishkama Bhakti.

An example of the above is found among the devotees of Bhagavan Sri Ramakrishna. Upendranath Mukhopadhyay first approached Him for wealth and worldly prosperity. With the blessings of Sri Ramakrishna, Upen Babu became a publication wizard during 1900s in Calcutta. He also started the popular 'Basumati' newspaper. He was not just wealth seeking person his life shows that he had a true devotion to Sri Ramakrishna. He used to help the poor and needy in a liberal way. His magazine spread the message of Sri Ramakrishna and Swami Vivekananda and was always eager to serve the monks and devotees of Sri Ramakrishna. He was always aware that Sri Ramakrishna was guiding him in the right direction.

Sri Ramakrishna has suggested five sutras for the people of this age which can take them from Sakama Bhakti to Nishkama Bhakti. They are:

1. Repeat God's name and sing His glories
2. Keep Holy Company
3. To go into solitude now and then and think of God
4. Always discriminate between the real and the unreal. God alone is real and eternal everything else is unreal and temporary
5. Do all your duties, but keep your mind on God

For a Grihastha, Sri Ramakrishna says that he should hold one hand to the feet of God and with the other hand has to perform his worldly duties.

तस्मात्सर्वेषु कालेषु मामनुस्मर युध्य च (remembering me always fight the battle of life) says Bhagavan Sri Krishna in the Bhagavadgita. When all the responsibilities are fulfilled, when the stage of retirement comes, the Grihastha should hold with both hands the feet of the Lord.

To the devotees of Sri Ramakrishna Sharanagati and Girish Chandra Ghosh are synonymous. His life is an example how a non-believer leading an unconventional life became a Bhakta of the highest order. His Sharanagati is so complete that sometimes even to drink a glass of water he had to wait for hours together for Sri Ramakrishna's permission.

God is like the philosopher's stone; whatever may be the base metal when it touches the philosopher's stone becomes gold. So, whatever be the amount of Vasanas (desires and past impressions) hoarded in our personality due to the ego-centric, extroverted activities, as a devotee when we approach Him in total surrender, all the Vasanas are purified, and the devotee moves more and more towards Him. In His infinite mercy, Bhagavan forgives all sins that a person might commit in his ignorance. And surely the Bhakta will overcome all sufferings and attain the Lord's feet which are an abode of everlasting joy.

I conclude by recollecting the words of unparalleled assurance bestowed upon all of us by our Holy Mother Sri Sarada Devi:

***“Whenever you are in distress, just say to yourself ‘I have a Mother’ ”***