

In pursuit of that elusive happiness

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Speaking Tree

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Most people believe themselves to be good. They don't hurt anyone, steal, lie, cheat, murder or commit arson. This is believed to be goodness. Yet they are agitated and wonder why. They frequent places of worship to overcome the agitation. 'If I am a good person why am I agitated?' Or else, they resort to what is called 'retail therapy' and go on a shopping binge, to the movies or take frequent vacations – in pursuit of that elusive happiness.

Others immerse themselves in social work, become activists, and join civil society organisations and movements. There's nothing wrong in all of this, but these are not going to provide solutions that could help you overcome that agitated feeling; they are nothing more than temporary balm.

To remove all types of mental agitations, one needs to get to the root. For that, study the three types of actions.

Selfish actions: They are designed for the welfare of oneself and maybe one's family. There is no mental vision beyond that. Such people are interested only in acquisition and enjoyment. There is a constant striving to either get something or to enjoy something. The world, however, is not designed to suit the comfort of any individual. Hence people with such mental attitudes are always agitated about something. The world inhibits either their acquiring something or enjoying something. Such people rarely identify themselves as selfish – yet, all their life is only about themselves. What they got /didn't get, enjoyed / didn't enjoy. In the story of life, they are the star!

Unselfish actions: This does not imply being devoid of acquisition and enjoyment. In fact there may be more acquisition and enjoyment! The difference is that the individual or his family is not the sole focus of attention. The person has a mental vision of something higher, nobler, vaster than that. His vision expands to include the wellbeing of others. Acquisition and enjoyment are byproducts of that vision. Such a person, who works for the welfare of a larger circle, finds a dramatic drop in agitation, and experiences a spurt of spontaneous happiness. They don't require acquisitions and enjoyments for happiness. They are happy persons, capable of enjoying their possessions.

In contrast, the person who worked solely for these objects finds no happiness in them, having got them. An unselfish person enjoys every bit of it. He works for an ideal and becomes capable of enjoying every part of life. A happy person enjoys everything. The gifts, possessions, challenges, people...

Selfless actions: These actions are desire-less actions. Such people are the jewels of humanity. Rare indeed are these blessed souls who are completely selfless. They have infinite happiness. Give them anything or take anything away, it makes no difference to their mental equilibrium. This is because they have removed the thought of self completely. Unselfishness is dilution of the thought of self. But selflessness is its complete removal. Unselfishness expands the vision but selflessness takes it to infinity.

Hence the secret mantra for removal of all agitations is gaining a higher ideal in life, rather than confining oneself with selfish acquisition and enjoyment. It is working for the welfare of more. Life becomes a happy experience. As E Carpenter puts it, 'There is no happiness until you drop thinking of yourself.'

- Dr. Janki Santoke

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