

Chapter 7

HAPPINESS IS A CHOICE

Never mind, be happy

Never mind if you do not get what you desire,
Be happy with what you have.

Never mind if you do not get success
Be happy with the effort that you have made.

Never mind when you meet people who are superior to you,
Be happy that you got a chance to learn something from them.

Never mind what others suggest you,
Be happy with what you can suggest to yourself.

Never mind what people think about you,
You are still what you are.

Never mind that you have to work hard,
Be happy that you have work to do as opposed to none.

Never mind if you are doing ordinary things,
Be happy that you can do them extraordinarily well.

Never mind what this world has to offer you,
Be happy that you can still make a difference.

Never mind that you are growing old,
Be happy that you can learn more and more.

Never mind if a wrong is done to you,
Be happy that it wasn't you who has done the wrong.

Never mind that you have made a mistake,
Be happy that you realised and corrected it.

Never mind losing over arguments,
Be happy for not losing friends over arguments.

Never mind if somebody hates you,
Be happy that you can still love him.

Never mind when people pull you down,
Be happy that you are doing something worthwhile.

Never mind when you are down,
Be happy that you can always get up.

Ask yourself what makes you happy

As a child, I used to ask for balloons, toys and chocolates. If I would get them, I used to be happy. If I didn't, I would get upset. I felt dejected when I did not get the things that I wanted, even though they might not have been useful for me, sometimes might have been even harmful.

When I grew up a little, I asked for freedom, fun and play. If I would get them, I used to be happy; if I didn't, I got really upset. After some

time I asked for bikes, money and wanted to be with my friends, away from all bondages. If I would get them, I was happy, otherwise, I was upset. Now when I sit back and think about the things that I craved for as a kid, as a young boy, I think that the things that I wanted were never really useful for me, but I always wanted those things and got unnecessarily upset when I did not get them. My happiness depended on things which were of no value but I did not understand this. So now when I ask for something, I ask myself, is it really worth having? Will I be really happy five years down the line, or ten years down the line, with this thing? The answer to most of the things is no. This has made my life a lot better and a lot simpler. No longer there is the anxiety to go for the mundane things, I can now look for the bigger and nobler things that a mortal can aspire for, and that makes me happier than ever before.

What makes one unhappy?

Excessive indulgence.

Worry.

Anxiety about results.

Bitterness in relations and an unforgiving attitude.

Unable to see the happiness and prosperity of others.

Comparison with others.

Meaningless and boring life.

Failures and difficulties

Criticism, holding grudges and resentments.

Unfulfilled desires.

Attachment to things. It is not possession but attachment that causes sorrow.

Old age, disease and death.

Let us look at some of the things which rob us of our happiness. One of the major challenges is to fight and control anger and agitation arising out of unsatisfied cravings, comparisons, delays, denials and several other things. The idea is to attain a state of mental balance and happiness and to reach the optimum in every facet of life.

Anger management

***‘Anyone can become angry—that is easy.
But to be angry with the right person,***

*to the right degree, at the right time,
for the right purpose, and in the right way
—this is not easy'*

—Aristotle

Anger is a negative emotion. It is an emotion which shows uncontrolled behavior. It shows that you are weak. You do not have control over your emotions. The best way is to channelise your anger, conserve your energy and use it in a better way. Being angry is a matter of choice; choosing anger is a bad option.

Learn the art of dealing with people. Remember that everybody is not the same. Understand that people hold different opinions.

Anger is one letter short of danger

Anger arising out of ego

Your ego is hurt when someone says something to you that you do not like or when someone insults you, when someone rebukes you, when you are not given your due or are mistreated. *This is the best setting to practise detachment, and show that you can transcend yourself, forgive and forget.*

Anger arising from unfulfilled desires

Anger arises when your desires are not fulfilled. The desires may be good or bad, but once you do not get what you desire, it creates an agitation in the mind, leading to anger. If the desires are noble, they will find a way to get materialised. If the desires are not good, they will create more agitation and will create a web around you. *Practise contentment.*

Anger arising from a wrong done to you

When someone wrongs you or cheats you, when something unrighteous is done, when injustice prevails, anger is natural. If you are right, you have a cause and a reason to be angry; however, do not waste your energy in letting out your anger. *Harness the energy and do something worthwhile, that is the best way to let out your anger.*

Don't let someone else's mistake or actions dictate your response. Your actions are ultimately under your control.

Once a news channel, BBC, conducted a programme untitled 'The Defining Moment', seeking to know the defining moments in the lives of the most successful people around. One of them was Azim Premji,

whose response just showed what it meant to harness anger and use it constructively.

Azim Premji said, 'I was studying at Stanford University. My father suddenly died, so I had to rush back to India and I attended the first annual general meeting of my company. A shareholder, who was very articulate, very vociferous and who categorised himself as a public spokesman, gave me a very sincere advice in front of all the shareholders. He said: "Mr. Premji, you should sell your shareholding and give it to more mature management because there is no way a person of your age with your experience can lead this company." And that really made me more and more determined to make a success of Wipro. So I think he was the biggest service I ever got in Wipro.'

Premji did not get angry with that person but managed to capitalise on his energy and build one of the most successful companies of India. Premji has been often called the father of the Indian outsourcing phenomenon, attracting global clients around the world and leading Wipro to great success.

Anger disturbs peace; it destroys calmness and makes a person lose his ability to reason. Your response may be filled with anger and that is natural. The anger, even though it may be righteous, does not do any good to the person who is angry. It causes damage to the physiology of the body; extreme anger can even cause heart attacks, strokes and death. Even in the normal course, anger is destructive. Harness the same energy to do something constructive. To be angry is easy, but to use the anger and create something significant and big out of it, requires an extraordinary mindset. It is easy to do the ordinary act, that is, to get angry; if you can control your response even once in ten situations which arouse your anger, you are on your way to rise. You can do so, if you try it.

Let us look at the ways in which we can multiply the moments of our happiness and increase them by our conscious endeavour.

Means to happiness

Seek to serve.

Desire to be free from dualities. Be unbiased and enjoy things.

Strive for excellence in whatever you do.

Fulfil your duty.

Live life with a mission, a sense of direction or a purpose.

Be at peace with yourself, meditate, be silent, create inner harmony,
Forgive, and forget the things that make you sad.

Detach yourself from the results, give your best.

Do what you love to do and that which elevates you in your life.

Think nobly, tune your mind to good thoughts; it works as a tonic for
the mind.

Practise what you preach.

Thinking about short-term gains brings sorrow, thinking about long-
term gains brings joy.

Make someone else happy; it works like magic.

Be thankful to God for the things that you have.

Forgiveness is a way to happiness

Many times people get upset by what others say; people get upset
and bear grudges against them. In the process they become tense, angry
and stressed because they cannot forgive and forget. They brood over such
actions again and again. Sometimes people take criticism personally and
take it to their heart.

But the research conducted by Greg Easterbrook has shown that the
people who forgive are happier and healthier than those who bear resent-
ments.

Studies have shown that being a forgiving person makes you a happy
person as opposed to those who bear grudges. Even when a wrong has
been done to you, to bear the feeling of hatred and anger does not help
you, instead it affects you physically and mentally both; it makes you
unhappy.

When you have negative emotions such as anger or hatred it is you
who gets affected and not the person with whom you are angry. So forgive
and forget in order to be happy. Take things in your stride; people have
the right to have their own opinions. You cannot control others but you
can always control yourself. Don't hold any negative opinion against any-
body and you will be a much happier person.

Psychological research has begun to show that being a forgiving person
is essential to happiness. Even when someone wrongs you, feeling angry
or hatred only causes your life descend to misery and resentment. You are
the person who suffers, not the person you are angry with. Forgiving on
the other hand can lift the burden.

Whispers from God

'Whoso heareth me shall not be confounded'

ECCLESIASTICUS xxiv. 30.

I heard a voice, looked around and found no one, to my surprise; then said the voice, 'I am God.' I was shocked. Then said he, 'Come to me. I am God. Don't worry, just be with me.' I said, 'Good Lord, salutations to thee.' I asked him, 'So what is thy wish for me?' He said, 'Why don't you listen to me?' I said, 'Never ever you spoke to me. You are away.' He replied, 'You do what you want, you never listen to me.' I said, 'But, God, you never spoke to me, you are always away.' He said, 'I am with you all the time, but you are never with me. I tell you often but you don't listen to me. You hear me not when I command, you care not what I say, you go your own merry ways and say to me that I don't say. I guide you, but you go astray and think that I am away. You give me sorrow and pain; when I tell you that you hurt me, you say that it is the only way since I am away.' I said, 'Sorry, God, I was lost, please guide me your way. I now know you were always there, but I went astray.' Lord replied, 'Listen to me, I am within you, I stop you from going the wrong way, I always tell you the right way. Listen to me to mend your ways.' 'But where are you, God?' I asked, and a prompt reply was heard, 'I am present as the little voice within you that always has something to say; let it be your guide and follow its commands. Prosperity and success will be following thy way.'

'Listen to your inner voice and follow what it tells you.

Everyone in this life is born to accomplish a mission.

Hence follow the inner command

and you will always be happy'

—Mother Teresa

Happiness out of work

'The secret of joy in work is contained

in one word excellence. To know how

to do something well is to enjoy it'

—Pearl S. Buck

Chanakya was one of the greatest teachers in ancient India. His teachings are well known as the 'Chanakya *niti*', which contains great management principles. He was a learned and scholarly person; he emphasised that one should analyse thoroughly before starting something new. He said, 'Once you start something, don't be afraid of failure and don't abandon it. People who work sincerely are the happiest.'

Take all possibilities into account and then start and once you start something don't give it up unless it is finished. To abandon something in the middle or being apprehensive does not give you joy. Hence work sincerely; put your heart and soul into your work, that is where happiness lies.

Excellence in your vocation brings happiness. When you do something well, when you enjoy your work, excellence follows. Strive for excellence. Excellence is the result of persistent and consistent effort. Csikszentmihalyi in his research has shown that doing what you love to do increases happiness and gives a sense of meaning to your life. Great athletes call it 'being in the zone'. This is described as the highest state which produces happiness; you move in the direction of your goal or purpose and your mind switches to a higher state where you just flow and do your activity, engage yourself in the process without thinking about anything else. It happens when you are completely tuned to what you are doing; you are no longer bothered about the outcome, but your mind is completely focused on what you are doing. For a student, it is focusing on the studies, focusing on the subject and learning rather than thinking about the marks. That is the best way to learn; if the mind of the student is engaged in the thought about marks at the time of studying his learning is affected. When the mind flows freely it is the moment when the greatest achievements come, be it artists, professionals or athletes; this is the secret of happiness.

Have a balanced state of mind

Sorrow, unhappiness is inevitable in life. There is no life that has ever existed without its share of suffering, disappointment and sorrow. What is important is, how well you are equipped to handle these phases of your life. It is all temporary; just as a pendulum swings from one end to the other, similarly a man moves from a state of joy to sorrow. But to be centred in life, adopting a balanced approach and enjoying ups and downs give real happiness. Aspire to be happy, come what may; don't be unnecessarily attached to something, don't worry for things that you cannot do anything about. Try to learn from failures and enjoy them. Maintain poise in success.

Celebrate not just success but also failures, not just pleasure but also pains, not just joy but also sorrow, not just triumphs but also adversities. When you begin to do that you celebrate life.

Remember the old story about the king who was unhappy and went out looking for happiness. At least, a wise person told the king to wear the shirt of the happiest person in his kingdom to become happy. After

a lot of search, the happiest man in the kingdom was found. But the man didn't have even a shirt. The message is still relevant; you don't really become happy by accumulating things. Happiness doesn't really depend on what you possess. Happiness is a state of mind which one cultivates. Great sages are always happy; they are in a state of bliss though they don't have any materialistic objects. Thus, it is a mistake to associate happiness with the things that you have.

Remember what makes you happy

Forget the critics, remember the criticism.

Forget the competition, remember your job.

Forget the grudges, remember to forgive.

Forget the people who hate you, remember those who love you.

Forget the defeats, remember the lessons from them.

Forget the distractions, remember your purpose.

Forget the people who pull you down, remember those who help you climb up.

Forget the adversity, remember the growth.

Forget the obstacles, remember your dreams.

Forget the negatives, remember the positives.

Forget the failures, remember that nobody is perfect.

Forget the excuses, remember to find a way to do work.

Forget what you did yesterday, remember that today is a new day.

Forget what people think about you, remember they are busy thinking about themselves.

Forget the difficulties, remember the opportunities.

Forget the disappointment, remember there is hope.

Forget the things that stop you, remember what gets you going.

Forget your worries, remember to smile.

Forget your limitations, remember that you can always overcome them.

Forget yourself, remember you are a part of the Infinite.

Forget 'cannot', remember you can do.

It is all about forgetting the bad things and remembering the good ones.

Enjoy the work

Happiness lies in the process, not in the end product. Attaching happiness with the end result or the destination deprives you of the true happiness that you can derive out of the work. Any activity can have two results, positive or negative; in case the result is negative, we get disheartened. Even if the result is positive, we don't enjoy it always and move on to the next desire or activity. We tend to focus so much on the result that we lose the real pleasure that is derived from the process. Happiness does not lie in the objects of desire; it lies in the mind of the man. So enjoy the process, irrespective of the result.

The best journey is the journey within. Look nowhere except within and there lies all the happiness. By all means have your possessions but don't let their absence cause distress. Learn to manage with or without the objects of your desire. That is when you get real happiness. Happiness that comes from external things is temporary and they also cause sorrow. Happiness is a state which cannot be achieved by getting things or by attachment to external objects. Attaching happiness to material possessions is like the mirage in the desert. Desert travellers see a pool of water in the desert where there is none. This is called mirage. It is caused by a trick of light in which a part of the blue sky appears to be surrounded by land which creates the illusion of a pool. When one goes to the place where water appears to be present, he finds out that the place has shifted farther away; it was just an illusion. Similar is the case with happiness which is associated with certain things; when you get them you come to know that those things don't really give happiness as imagined but only create an illusion of happiness once you get them you realise that.

A deer seeks the scent and moves from one place to the other in search of it. It doesn't know that the scent is in its own body, located in its natal, and that it doesn't need to go out to find it. Man is also like the deer; though he has an abundance and all happiness within; he goes out in search of happiness but finds it not; he knows not that happiness is inside and not outside.

The way to enjoy is to give up attachment.

The way to succeed is to persist.

The way to happiness is to enjoy the process.

The way to strength is through struggles.

The way to power is to take responsibility.

The way to love is to serve.

The way to live is to be awake.

The way to peace is to be silent.

A story is narrated about a man who walked up to Socrates and asked him about Athens. He said that he wanted to shift to Athens, so he enquired about the life in Athens. Socrates asked him, 'What is your native place like? How is life there?' The man replied, 'The place is full of conceit, confusion, chaos and all bad people stay there.' Socrates said, 'Athens is the same. You will find the same things here.' After some days another man came to Socrates and asked him the same question about Athens. Socrates asked him about his native place to which the man replied, 'The place is full of peace, cooperation and people are very helpful and cordial.' Socrates said, 'Welcome to Athens.'

You make your own environment

Most of the problems are internal, but we look for external things to fix them.

A man who is not at peace with himself seldom finds peace outside.

Be willing to fight against your problems, never run away from them.

What you see outside is merely a reflection of inside.

If you are happy within, you will see good things in life. If you are sad and down, you will see bad things. What you see is a reflection of your internal state. When you are cheerful, everything looks harmonious. When you are sad, everything looks chaotic.

'If our inner world is not in harmony we cannot be in harmony with others; if the inner world is in harmony we cannot be in conflict with others.'

When you see a quarrel it means that inner harmony is missing. But the person who is in a blissful state, like the sages, in a state of extreme bliss, he seems to be unaffected even when some wrong is done to him. He is still at peace with himself and others; he doesn't waste his energy on things which cannot be changed or what are beyond him.

Recall the story of King Midas who was granted his wish that whatever he would touch it would turn into gold. He was very happy; he started touching things and they turned into gold. The clothes, the fruits the utensils and everything he touched turned into gold. He was happy until he touched his daughter who was turned into gold. He realised that even gold and riches cannot bring happiness; he cried for his wish to be taken back. He also realised that everything was temporary. Anything that came from outside was short-lived and could not make you

happy for long. Even though you may be turning all the things in your life into gold, beware there may come a day when you may regret it, if you don't realise that beyond the riches there are some things in the life that cannot be neglected.

'The happiness which is obtained by long practice of disciplines, which puts an end to the sorrow, which is like poison in the beginning but like nectar in the end, which is derived from the serenity arising from the real self, is said to be happiness in the mode of goodness(*sattvika*).'

'Whereas happiness is declared to be in the mode of passion, which is born of the union of the senses with their objects, which seems nectar-like in the beginning but turns out to be poison in the end.'

'That happiness is in the mode of ignorance (*Tamasika*), which springs from sleepiness, sloth and heedlessness and which is delusive in its effect on the spirit from the beginning to the end.'

Bhagvadgita 18:37-39.

Bhagvadgita describes the happiness based on the modes of nature. Thus the real happiness is that which arises by discipline and effort. It is when you go deep within, when you are in harmony with yourself. It is difficult in the beginning but slowly by practice you begin to derive happiness and the pleasure that comes from nowhere but from your spirit. Happiness that arises from external objects and lucrative things is temporary and gives sorrow in the end, though it is quite enticing and pleasing in the beginning. Also the happiness which comes from the vices has a corrupting effect on the human; in the long run what you get is pain and not happiness; refrain from all such activities and experience the real happiness.

'Guard against momentary joy which may give long-term sorrow'

Whatever brings us pleasure we must do that is the common notion that one has, but that leads to more distress and unhappiness. Someone has rightly said, 'Going after happiness deprives you of it, but when you don't chase it, it comes to you.' Don't run after pleasures, don't chase them, do your work and be happy with it. All joy will come to you. If you cannot find happiness in what you do, then you will be unhappy most of the time, as you need to work for most of the time in your life. Work is ultimately the source of happiness and joy. Identify what makes you really happy in life and do it.

Cherish the beauty of the moment,

For it shall pass without your notice; it brings joy, unlimited.

Cherish the music of the morning,

For it shall pass without your notice; it brings tranquillity, infinite.

Cherish the silence of the night;

For it shall pass without your notice; it brings the promise of sunrise.

Cherish all that there is, cherish all that exists,

For it shall pass in waiting for something that does not, and you forget every moment is life.