

# The Causes of Unhappiness and The Means of Happiness.

BY ACHARYA VIJAYRAMCHANDRASURISHVARJI.

The thirst for happiness is common to all living beings. It is difficult to find a single creature who does not long for happiness and detest suffering. When the seers say that "all beings of the world are unhappy", it does not signify that the latter do not desire happiness. What they mean to say is that though all creatures stagger under the weight of suffering, happiness is their only quest. There would have been no activity in the world but for this quest for happiness. It is crystal clear that all activities during the twenty-four hours of day and night are designed to achieve the same end. Yet we know that happiness remains a distant goal. Such a phenomenon may well create misgivings about the validity of the dictum that the work wherein the mind, speech and action are unified should succeed. But it should not be forgotten that success attends only the work in which the concord of the mind, speech and action is rightly directed. It is but natural that if such concord is misdirected, the result may be contrary. Though the mind, speech and action are working in unison to attain happiness, we know from experience that ordinarily nobody succeeds in attaining it. Is it not, then, necessary to probe the reasons of this strange spectacle? If any work fails to succeed, the defect must lie somewhere with the means. If happiness is not attained, despite the conjoint working of the mind, word and deed to attain it, it must be due to the imperfections of the means. It is the duty of a wise man to repair this deficiency of means and then

wish for happiness. Things cannot be attained merely by wishful thought. How is one to explain the paradox that though the whole world desires happiness, talks of happiness and works for happiness, the number of those who are actually happy could be counted by the tips of fingers. It is our common experience to find all creatures of the world in the throes of misery—some of this kind, and some of the other. The reason is that the world has identified happiness with the acquisition of objects, which are inherently ephemeral, subject to change, and not of the soul. It is the height of unwisdom to expect happiness from the acquisition of such materials. The sages never recognized these fleeting, changing and external worldly objects as the means of happiness. The hope of gaining genuine happiness through the acquisition of perishable objects of the world is like running after a mirage. Consequently the great teachers, while trying to discover the real causes of happiness and misery, put down one thing as the quintessence of all religions, namely, 'दुःखं पापात्-सुखं धर्मात्'—suffering arises from sin, happiness from practice of Dharma.

Thus happiness is the fruit of Dharma, and misery the product of sin. That this diagnosis is correct will be readily conceded but that itself does not and cannot ensure success. If the desired objective is to be gained, it is further necessary for you to comprehend the real nature of Dharma and sin. Dharma can be practised when there is a true

conception of its nature and when the means of its attainment are found. Our principal endeavour today is to discover the means of happiness for which the world is thirsting. Is it not a fact that all beings of the world yearn for happiness which is unmixed with pain, and complete by nature and permanence? It is possible they are not able to express this desire in the above specific terms; but there is no doubt that this is their innermost desire. If the world takes delight in happiness which is mixed with pain, it is because it finds unalloyed happiness unattainable. But all the same it craves for happiness which is undiluted, complete and durable. The world is strenuously striving to gain this happiness, but it eludes its grasp.

Even if we leave aside past births, is there a single moment during the years of present life that have rolled by wherein an individual has not striven his best for happiness? Do you not admit that you have till now failed to attain it despite the best of efforts? Until you get a clear conception of this matter, there will be neither a real liking for the means of happiness that are indicated by the great seers, nor will they be taken up for actual practice. If the labour spent by you till now had power to procure you exclusive happiness, you would have surely attained it. Your labour is not small; your desire for happiness is not less keen; your efforts are unremitting and unstinted. Yet it is certain that you have not gained

happiness. Wasting a noble human life in blind pursuits without pausing to think even when the coveted thing is not attained till the end of life is both deplorable and reprehensible. If after years of labour and longing the cherished happiness is not attained, it is your duty to pause and think of the causes thereof and try to discover the means of its attainment. But if you fail in this duty, you will be open to the reproach that though you had excellent opportunities such as birth in Ārya land, Ārya caste, and Ārya family, you wasted away your life like an ignorant fool who loses a wish-yielding stone. People born in a country where there are no religious sentiments and means to pursue noble thoughts may be pardoned if they die without knowing the truths of religion. But in this country, where the great seers have written copiously on every spiritual topic, if you die without knowledge of the means of happiness, you would be condemned like people remaining hungry in the midst of plenty. Is it not true that you have ready at hand assistance of excellent materials? Though the great thinkers of this land have placed at your disposal rich treasures of knowledge, you have no leisure to think of them. It is no small measure of your luck that the great benefactors move about knocking at your doors to acquaint you with the ways and means of happiness. The great seers of this land utilized all their talents and capacities in thinking out of the soul, of its happiness and the means thereof and placed at our

disposal all these materials; yet if we fail to avail of them, our conduct would be held up to reproach in the manner of the people who go hungry in the midst of abundance.

What have the great teachers preached? Happiness would be the result, if you follow the teachings of religion in this manner; misery would follow if you commit such and such sins. It is a different matter if we cannot forsake the things that bring misery and follow the ways that bring happiness. But does it not mean our disregard for the great teachers, if we remain out of touch with the scriptures and follow the pursuits that suit our fancies? Have you ever pondered in which corner of the globe happiness can be discovered? If you have no such thought, should I call you a man of experience or by any other name? Even those who are reputed as men of experience, when asked to point out where to find even a shred of happiness in the world, begin scratching their heads. It may be that a man may not find himself capable of complete renunciation or be prepared to relinquish wordly things; but nobody would say he does not want happiness. The desire of your spiritual benefactors and that of yours is identical. They intend to endow you with the very things for which you are thirsting. There is no difference in that. But your and their paths of happiness diverge. You have visualized happiness in one direction, while they show it in another. The fundamental difference lies in this. There is only one remedy for obliterating this

difference and it is that you should think out whether the means that you have envisaged as the only proper means of gaining happiness and in whose pursuit you are entangled so much have the inherent capacity to procure you happiness of an unadulterated, complete and abiding nature. Have you thought over the matter? It is apparent that you are toiling for it day and night. But are you not frittering away your energies thoughtlessly? You have been toiling for years at the rate of many hours per day, but can you say with the hand on your breast that you have gained peace?

If you cannot, is it not necessary that you should retrace your steps and think of the means shown by the great seers? If a new path is to be shown to the world, it should be described with the surroundings in which it is placed. It is a fact that happiness is wanted by all and not misery. It is only in search of happiness that you go and settle in foreign countries thousands of miles away from your home and family. Is that less renunciation? Thus you too have the capacity for renunciation; only it is rooted in attachment and consequently it is not commendable. Renunciation which springs from attachment does not benefit but harms the soul. Our point is that you cannot be blamed for not striving for happiness. You wish for it. From that standpoint you are not unfit in any way. You have the requisite qualifications. You have got desire, will for work and readiness for sacrifice. You are not even

physically weak. Who will deny that you have undergone much hardship in quest of happiness? But the essential point for consideration is that despite all these endeavours, the fire of pain is not extinguished and wherever you go, you only add to this fire. But who pauses to investigate why this is so? All this discussion is meant to bring home to you the necessity of practising the means laid down by the seers for attaining happiness. Tell me, if despite so much labour and activity happiness has not been gained, what are the means for it. The great seers say after laborious search that they find happiness in the practice of Dharma and not in sin. But worldly beings will be convinced of it, only if they turn their experience to good account. If they think dispassionately over their labours for acquiring different ends, they will soon come to the conclusion that despite their intense longing and striving for happiness they have not been able to acquire it. Our object in embracing asceticism is not to court misery. To forego the use of conveyance, to walk barefooted, bare-headed, all these hardships are meant for happiness, and not for misery. Whatever we suffer now physically is not for unhappiness. If you have found happiness in some other activity and can show it to us, we are ready to retrace our steps; otherwise you should retrace yours. Either change our direction or that of yours. If despite so much effort you have not found happiness in the world, we boldly assert that we have

well utilized our brains and have been wise enough in renouncing the world. If those who have not renounced the world have not profited by their worldly activities, it is not an offence but a duty to propagate our path of renunciation in the world. What is saintliness ? It means renunciation of the ideas of 'mine' and 'thine' and to remain entirely engrossed in thoughts of the welfare of the soul. If we cannot scale the stately height of saintliness, we should not hold it to blame, but should blame ourselves for our imperfections. We should consider that we possess means of a high order, and it is our own fault that we do not exert ourselves to be worthy of them. True welfare lies in renouncing the world and in embracing the life of asceticism according to the teachings of the omniscient seers and in devoting ourselves heart and soul to that path.

All people ask for happiness, wish for it; yet every now and then they ask themselves "What are the means of happiness ?" One person says, "Happiness lies in amassing money;" the second says, "Money I possess, but I have not a minute's rest." The third says, "Wealth I have, but no heir to inherit it." The fourth says, "I have an heir, but he has gone mad." The ruler of a country says, "A rebellion has broken out in the state." He only knows his state of mind. You know yours. If happiness cannot be found in kingdom, power, wealth, prosperity, honour, fame, etc., do you agree to

dedicate yourselves to the guidance of scriptures ? The scriptures point out that happiness lies in things quite different from those with which you in your imagination associate it. Only when the old belief is annihilated and this new one is established in its stead, it is possible to rear a superstructure on it. When a new and different path is to be shown, the disadvantages of the old path should be laid bare in their stark nakedness. Not one man in the world possesses the type of happiness he is hankering after. A thing which gives felicity to one and causes pain to another cannot be a true means of happiness. The means of happiness should be a common denominator. What kind of happiness does the world desire ? Unalloyed, complete, and everlasting. Tell me if this diagnosis is in any way faulty. You want such complete happiness whereafter not a vestige of pain or envy should be felt. But not a single object of the world has the power to give such happiness to the soul. We therefore advise those who are engrossed in worldly pleasures, who are intoxicated with power and are steeped in materialism, to accept the life of religious asceticism. Even the big palaces and bungalows have to be left behind at one time or another. As a result of your attachment to these palatial bungalows, you will be dragged to places where these very bungalows will prick you like thorns. The objects of enjoyment of the world shock us to the very depth of our being. We, therefore, call you to come out renouncing all,

lest the allurements of matter shatter all your high soaring ambitions of happiness. If anyone asks, "Why do you turn people into beggars?" The answer is that a beggar is he who whines for bread and supplicates the rich for favours. But one who stands upright in the majesty of his own self is not a beggar. Nothing will please us more than that you relinquish the things to which you are clinging. The things by which you are surrounded are false and the begetters of suffering. That is why we ask you to come out of the world. Rest assured, this sacred call is being sounded without any mental reservation.

That every living being thirsts for happiness is undeniable. We have seen that there is no happiness in wordly pleasures and prosperity and that unalloyed, complete and enduring happiness lies only in virtuous conduct and practice of Dharma. It has been further shown that misery is the result of sin and happiness that of Dharma. It remains for us now to consider the nature of Dharma.

The following verse puts in a nutshell the essence of Dharma as conceived by our ancient seers.

श्रुयतां धर्मसर्वस्वं, श्रुत्वा चैवावधार्यताम् ।  
आत्मनः प्रतिकूलानि, परेषां न समाचरेत् ॥

"Listen to the full content of Dharma, and hearing it enshrine it in your heart. One should not do unto others what is painful to one's own self."

The above dictum represents Dharma in its highest form. But who can observe it completely? Not

those who are burdened with the appendages of houses and bungalows. Those who cannot observe it completely should try to observe it to the extent of their capacities. What should be the ideal of those who observe Dharma only partially? Their ideal should be never to do anything which may harm any creature, except where momentary pain is meant for ultimate good. It is the real good that ends in good. When you will decide to practise this Dharma fully, compulsory renunciation of property will be inevitable. It is your attachment for your material possessions which urges you to tell lies. Because you revel in these things, you have become cruel. So long you are enmeshed in these entanglements, sin is inevitable. It will give us joy to find you rise above these entanglements and get rid of sin. But this condition will be reached only when you have enshrined the above dictum in your heart. When you will be imbued with the sentiment that "I should not do unto another what I dislike being done unto me" there will be nothing for you to take your stand up except on saintliness, whose symbol is the soft broom-stick such as I hold in my hand. We keep this broom for moving aside minute insects, which are invisible to the eye, for their protection. This act is called Ahimsā. Our Ahimsā (non-violence) is so minute as that. It is, however, necessary to bear in mind that the true concept of Ahimsā (non-violence) is quite different from what has become popular nowadays among people who swear by it as a political shiboloth. One who is

really non-violent does not crave for any material object. A man attached to wordly things cannot observe non-violence in its purest form. Real non-violence does not make a man mad after things which are not of the soul. In these days, violence often masquerades under the name of non-violence. Discrimination in this matter is very essential, lest we become adherents of violence in the name of non-violence. It is, therefore, essential to follow the principle "Do not do unto others what you would not have done unto you", which contains the very essence of Dharma in a nutshell. This doctrine can be properly followed only when life is lived according to the teachings of the Omniscient seers.

There are no two opinions that all men thirst for happiness and that they are unsparing in their efforts for its attainment. Yet it is generally true that they are unhappy. It is indisputable that the happiness people hanker after is the fruit of Dharma and Dharma alone. This Dharma is summed up as "Do unto others what you would have done unto you." To acquire this Dharma in life, three things are essential, which are indicated by a great seer in the following verse—

साधुसेवा सदा भक्त्या मैत्री सत्त्वेषु भावतः ।  
आत्मीयग्रहमोक्षश्च, धर्महेतुप्रसाधनम् ॥

1. Devout and heartfelt daily service of saints.
2. Friendly feeling towards all the creatures of the world without expecting reward and with a desire to do them good.

3. Annihilation of the sense of mineness in respect of ephemeral worldly things.

These three are the means to attain the objective of the fivefold Dharma of Ahimsā, etc., and therefore they are the means of real happiness.

The first means of happiness is "साधुसेवा सदा भक्त्या"—i. e., readiness to serve saints with the fervour of the heart. A saint is he who is superior to others in virtue and not in age. Therefore, obedience to the precepts of those who are great by dint of virtue with single-minded devotion is the first means of happiness in the world. A man who does not possess respect towards the virtuous, cannot be happy; for real happiness lies in the unfoldment of the virtues of the soul. Reverence towards the virtuous is the root and source from where develop the virtues. Consequently, unless people live their lives according to the precepts of the really virtuous, they will never be able to attain real happiness, though they may rack their brains for it.

Thus the first means of happiness is service of the Guru, which entitles one to the following three privileges—

1. The benefit of hearing daily discourses.
2. Sight of those who practise Dharma.
3. Cultivation of refined manners.

These three are the great fruits of Sādhu-Bhakti. A devotee of saints will have the benefit of always hearing

from their lips very useful things as a result of which he will naturally endeavour to escape from Himsā, falsehood, stealing, sensuality and other sins which are the causes of suffering. If he cannot entirely give up sexual thought, he will at least control it. Such a man will gradually grow in virtues. Besides, he will have an opportunity to meet many noble souls, who gather before the saints and will come to learn good manners and politeness. If you know how to act properly, you will avoid wrong actions and right activities will follow as a matter of course. Wickedness will disappear and excellence will grow; sinful tendencies will be exterminated and the impressions of Puṇya will awaken. The feeling for doing good will be aroused and the proneness to do wrong will be annihilated. The wicked desire of plundering others will stop and the generous urge for charity will awaken. Wicked conduct will be avoided, temptation to abuse others will be overcome. All these are real, genuine and substantial means of gaining happiness. They will help one to acquire exquisite peace in this world and complete enduring and unadulterated happiness in the end.

The second means of happiness is "भैत्री सत्त्वेषु भावतः"—which means cultivation of the feeling of friendship towards all creatures without any idea of self-interest, without any hope of reward in return for obligation rendered. Such a noble sentiment naturally covers within its sweep all people irrespective of whether one is a

relative or a stranger, a friend or foe, noble or ignoble, big or small. This virtue is the offspring of Sādhu-Bhakti. It is true that there are very few people in the world who are imbued with this noble sentiment. Nevertheless, this is the ideal which all must try to reach. Such a feeling of friendship creates attachment that conduces to the good of all. It teaches one to wish for the good and happiness of even a treacherous enemy and one's own murderer.

According to this poet-seer, such continuous feeling of friendship towards others awakes good sentiments in the soul and silences envy. A man who always wishes good to others experiences an inflow of good feelings, as a result of which envy burning in the heart is extinguished and the soul enjoys exquisite peace. Can one who bears no envy towards others maintain any imaginary fears? Thanks to this feeling, the Sādhus live joyfully, though they move about bare-headed and barefooted, renouncing everything. If this teaching is remembered in life and even partially incorporated into conduct, you have reaped a rich harvest in this human life. But the foundation of the two means mentioned above rests on the third.

The third means of happiness "आत्मीयग्रहमोक्षश्च" means annihilation of the feeling of mineness in respect of the ephemeral objects of the world. Family, prosperity, kingdom, palace, honour, pleasures—all these are transitory. They are not yours. You shall have to depart leaving them against



your will and despite all your protests and remonstrances. Your entreaties out of attachment to your bungalow, parks, wife and children to keep you alive will not avail. Consequently, these worldly objects are not yours; they are all transient. The annihilation of the feeling of mineness in respect of these objects is called renunciation. The day this feeling of mineness towards objects which are not of the soul is annihilated, your heart will pour out in sympathy towards all creatures and in service to the Sādhus. Thereafter worries and sufferings will lose their sting for you. The news of the destruction of a house or death of a son, loss of wealth or of the means of livelihood will not perturb your equanimity. Consequently the fruit of Sādhu-Bhakti and cultivation of the true feeling of friendship is indicated as the third means to happiness, which lies in the annihilation of the feeling of mineness in respect of all external and worldly objects.

Much spiritual benefit will accrue to you when you succeed in annihilating the feeling of attachment to worldly objects. With the annihilation of the feeling of mineness will be annihilated covetousness, which is the begetter of all forms of vice and the slayer of all virtues. Covetousness, lust and desires of various kind engender every form of vice. Vices appear in proportion to the intensity of material desires. Sin increases with covetousness. The greater the lust, the greater the sin. The greater the desires, the more the vices. Does not your lust grow because you

cannot get over the feeling of mineness with reference to material objects? Would you not admit that your ambition is to hold the world in fee? Where lust increases, vices grow and virtues begin to disappear. Lust is the generating mother of all vices. With the extinction of the feeling of mineness in respect of earthly objects, lust will be annihilated, with the result that goodwill towards creatures and attachment to the company of saints would follow as a matter of course. The seers say that one who is free from the lust for earthly things, who cherishes good feelings towards all creatures of the world disinterestedly and who always devotes himself to the service of saints is never unhappy. On the contrary, a man who is covetous, envious and moves in bad company is necessarily unhappy. Thousands of such unhappy souls are found today. But an instance of a man being miserable though possessed of these three virtues will be hard to find. We, therefore, exhort you to accept the path of saintliness. We commend this path to you because it exclusively leads to happiness. It is our earnest desire that you should embrace this path either completely or partially, or failing that at least develop a liking for it. When you develop a liking towards saintliness, all your strife will at once subside. But if you have no such capacity, you should not at least fail to do homage to those who accept this path and help them in every way you can. Either you should become virtuous or at least respect

the virtuous. Not to be virtuous on the one hand, and on the other to take up arms against those who are virtuous is a sign of depravity. Not to become noble oneself and prevent others from attaining nobleness, not to cherish noble sentiments towards others, and withdraw help from the virtuous even where there is capacity to render it, and to oppose them for the sake of opposition, are symptoms of a diseased and deplorable mentality. If such a disease prolongs its course and immediate remedies are not undertaken to check its progress, it will prove fatal to the spiritual life of the people. Therefore beware before it is too late.

It should not be forgotten that the three means of happiness indicated above can be fully practised only when the life of religious asceticism, which is the genuine path of Swaraj, *i. e.*, freedom of the soul, is accepted

as a living ideal. Rest assured, only the sincere practice of these three means would give real peace to the soul in this life and enable it to get such materials in future as would free it from the contact of Karma, which is attached to it since beginningless Time, and endow it with unalloyed, complete and everlasting happiness free from any spark of pain. In the pursuit of this path lies the fruition of human life endowed with privileges, viz., birth in Ārya land, Ārya family and Ārya caste. Consequently, the seers exhort us not to spare ourselves in renouncing sin and following Dharma, which is the real path to unalloyed bliss. Those who act contrary to this teaching reap misery, though their goal is happiness. Let all people be inclined to relinquish sin and follow Dharma and as a result obtain the imperishable beatitude of Mokṣa. This is our heartfelt blessing.\*

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## An Exhortation.

O my mind ! turn thy eyes towards the Lord just a bit and remember Him at every moment just as a pauper takes stock of the few pies in his possession every now and then. The Lord is an embodiment of beauty, gentleness, wisdom and virtue; He is comely and extremely benevolent, the delighter of saints, the destroyer of sins and the killer of passions. O Tulasidās, if thou seekest to cross the ocean of metempsychosis without the aid of *Yoga*, ritual, austerity and self-control, let not the lotus-feet of Śrī Hari slip from thy memory during any part of the day.

—Tulasidās.

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