

Satsang with Sri Swami Veditatmananda Saraswati
Arsha Vidya Gurukulam
Internal Happiness

Question

How do we acquire internal happiness?

Answer

Happiness is a subjective phenomenon, and therefore, our mind is the means for experiencing happiness. To the extent that our mind enjoys serenity, to that extent we experience inner happiness. Therefore, a serene mind is the means of acquiring happiness. The world, however, equates happiness with possessions. We acquire happiness only by developing an inner poise or inner clarity or inner maturity. Thus the real means of acquiring inner happiness is living a life based on right values which helps us gain that serenity. To the extent that I have developed that inner growth, inner maturity, inner purity, or inner tranquility, to that extent I am happy.

Question

Therefore, it seems like we cannot pursue happiness. Happiness just happens when we set the correct conditions for it.

Answer

Yes. If I could will to be happy then I do not require anything, including Vedanta. I am happy because I willed to be happy! But that does not happen. It is like love. I cannot will to love somebody. It has to happen. I cannot will love, or happiness, or compassion, or kindness. They all have to happen. All I can do is to perform an act of kindness, and slowly begin to invoke that kindness in me. Similarly, I cannot will to be happy, but I can perform actions to invoke happiness in me. Therefore I can use my will to perform actions in such a way as to invoke the happiness from myself. The Bhagavad Gita teaches us to perform our actions in the spirit of service, in the spirit of offering. This is the way of invoking happiness. In course of time, we will develop a frame of mind which is able to experience that inner happiness.

Question

There is an insatiable desire in all of us to do better in terms of material wealth, which sometimes leads to unhappiness. How do we reconcile that with being happy?

Answer

As long as your pursuit of wealth is based on legitimate means, then it is ok to pursue wealth. If you are honest, hard-working, you do not trample upon the rights of other people, and your pursuit is not at the cost of somebody else, then it is fine. Wealth that is acquired through legitimate means will make you happy. On the other hand, wealth acquired through illegitimate means is likely to make you unhappy. Therefore, we have to manage our ambitions. We should fulfill our ambitions on the basis of accepted, moral values.

Hopefully someday you will recognize that what you are seeking is not money. But you may not recognize that until you acquire that money. Sometimes mere intellectual recognition of what Vedanta tells you may not be enough; it may be necessary to have your own experiences in life. You may have to experience things and discover it yourself. You may have to earn money to recognize that just money is not enough. While it is possible for some to see the limitation without having to go through the experiences, others may learn only from their own experiences. Therefore it becomes necessary to acquire things, to achieve things in life. Do that through proper means. Then the mind will be mature enough to learn from experiences. A day may come when you have seen the limitations of all these achievements, and you may be able to detach yourself from them. Sometimes a person's mind is mature enough to discover detachment without going through experiences. In many cases the mind requires to go through various experiences before it can discover that detachment¹.

¹ Transcribed and edited by Chaya Raj and KK Davey.