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The Search for Happiness

Extract from my notes, Satsang by Swami Suddhananda, Tamil Nadu, South India

Photo: the path leading to Sri Ramana Maharshi's mountain cave on Arunachala Mountain

We try to match objects with our thoughts. We have ideas of how the world should be, and we try to make our ideas fit reality. When the world doesn't match our thoughts, we get disillusioned. We are victims of our own ignorance. We are under the spell of our thoughts. This happens unconsciously and because of our ignorance.



Every movement in the whole of creation is to find happiness. Everybody wants happiness. We are conditioned to look outside of ourselves. People are brainwashed into believing that things bring happiness – education, job, money. Get a good education > so you can get a good job > so you can get good money > so you can be happy. You get all these things, but you still aren't happy. Then religions steps in – you didn't find happiness by getting all these things, so renounce them!

There is no outside address for happiness. Religion comes in and says: happiness is inside. But only the direction changes – you are still unhappy, you are still searching for happiness. An extrovert looks outside, and gets frustrated. An introvert looks inside, and gets lonely and isolated. Happiness is not outside or inside. We are not interested in the place of search – outside or inside. We are interested in

the seeker. You are the happiness.

Happiness is your Self. What you looking for in life? Happiness – but actually you are looking for your Self. You can call it happiness in secular language, self-realization or enlightenment in philosophical language, or God in religious language.

But we think something is needed for our happiness. When you are missing someone or something, what you are really missing is your Self. The presence or absence of the person or thing is not the problem. The presence or absence of thought is the problem (I want, I need, I desire). One thought can drive you crazy. When the thought (that drives you crazy) is absent, there is relief, silence, peace, happiness. You are in touch with your Self. We feel happy in nature, because nature brings us back to our Self.

It is not the absence of the object that makes you unhappy, but the presence of thought. How does thought come? Unknown things don't create any problems for you. What you don't know about, you don't worry about. There are millions of people in the world that you don't know, and therefore you don't care about.

With the first thought, comes knowledge. When the first thought comes, there are 3 possible reactions: like, dislike and neutral. These qualities do not come from the object, they come from your mind. And your mind changes all the time. Over time, like becomes dislike, and dislike becomes like etc.

If you like something, eg chocolate, there is an unconscious buildup in the memory system. You become an unconscious victim of this process, and then there is no choice. The advertising industry knows this and exploits it. Once the thought has been pushed into your head, you can't resist. You are not free.

First the thought is put into your head. Then there is the unconscious buildup of that thought, which becomes desire. We are told it is good to satisfy our desires, but desire leads to unhappiness. The unconscious buildup causes obsession. In regard to objects, there is a solution: work > get money > purchase the object > satisfy your desire. Objects have no choice so they can satisfy your desires. But animate objects are different: you can't purchase human relationships.

Thought becomes desire. Satisfy it and get rid of the desire. This brings relief. But it is only temporary. Stop desire. This is not possible. It is like saying: if you have a headache, cut off your head and you will get rid of the headache. This is the only way we know how to deal with our desires. We try to get the object in order to satisfy our desire.

A big thought buildup creates big desire, which leads to big satisfaction. There is a direct proportion. This is why we strive for difficult things – to build up desire. Unless we create a desire for something, getting it won't bring relief. If you don't desire something and you get it, there is no relief, nothing, it's no big deal. The more desire > the more satisfaction. The bigger the agitation > the bigger the relief. This process happens unconsciously. If we get things too easily, there isn't much buildup of desire, so not much satisfaction.

When you get the object of your desire, the wanting thought is gone, and you get relief. You attribute your happiness to the object, but the object didn't bring your happiness. It only helped to remove the thought that was agitating you. Satisfaction comes not from getting what you want, but from relief from the agitating thoughts.

When you get the object, thought is suspended. When thoughts are gone, you are with your Self. And this is where happiness comes from. But you think happiness comes from getting

the object, so you continue the chase, and you chase objects for the rest of our life. Or you think happiness comes from an empty mind, so you chase that. An extrovert thinks happiness comes from objects, and so desires them. An introvert thinks happiness comes from an empty mind, and so desires that.

If you think someone or something gives you happiness, you will be dependent on it. The dust of desire goes into the serene pool that is your Self. No doctor can give you health. Health is natural to you. A doctor can only take away disease. Nothing can give you happiness. Happiness is your true nature. Ignorance is the disease.

Mindful Hatha Yoga

Tuesdays and Thursdays: 18h00 - 19h30

Cost: R50 per class

All classes include some teachings on yoga philosophy, a sequence of basic asanas (yoga poses), guided relaxation, pranayama (breathing exercises), and meditation.

Self-knowledge and Meditation

Wednesday evenings: 19h00 - 21h00

New series starting 21 April

"I, the Ultimate Pilgrimage"

A series of 5 DVD teachings by Swami Suddhananda

Followed by Q&A, discussion and meditation

Self-retreats and healing holidays

Available anytime: see www.satchitanand.co.za/healing_holiday/htm

We are all connected in profound and beautiful ways. Your personal growth, your healing, is needed by us all. It is your greatest gift to us all. When you heal your own heart, your own mind, it ripples out and affects the whole collective ocean of humanity. We all benefit from what you heal in yourself ... Various holistic treatments and healing therapies are available in our Healing Centre. Simply taking time out to be with yourself and to connect with your life on a deeper level is healing. Spend time in our garden Sanctuary - Interfaith Meditation Chapel - and experience the healing benefits of silence. Local Plett residents who wish to spend some time in silence in this beautiful and peaceful space may phone 044 533 0453.

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