

Happiness & Vedanta- What is it, Where is it, & Why do I want it?

(<http://www.shiningworld.com/Books%20Pages/HTML%20Books/Self-Knowledge.htm>)

Everyone every minute is fully engaged trying to attain greater happiness. When I take a job, fall in love, read a book, eat a meal, go to the dentist, pray or meditate, I expect the activity and/or its results to make me feel better than I do at the moment. No matter how good I feel I can always imagine a state of greater happiness. If I'm feeling miserable, my actions will be calculated to remove or lessen the misery, a situation I view as an increase in happiness. When a better state is inconceivable, I refrain from activities that might compromise it.

Everything we do is for the sake of happiness. Some accumulate money, not necessarily for itself, but for the happiness it supposedly brings. Others seek happiness in life-threatening sports which produce a "high," an aliveness beyond the "normal" state. We ingest chemicals, pills, drink, and drugs to change our state of mind for the better. Belief in God is never intended to make one miserable.

Can happiness be achieved getting/possessing certain things?

At first glance activities seem to produce happiness. I jog, garden, meditate, or ski and feel happy. **But if happiness were in an activity, the activity should produce happiness for anyone performing it.** A granny who knits for fun will not take pleasure in bungee jumping. A steak makes a carnivore happy, a vegetarian unhappy.

In spite of this fact we work overtime to get happiness through objects and activities.

Some try to attain happiness through the mind. Poets, writers, artists, and intellectuals find happiness playing with thoughts and ideas, feelings and emotions. Professionals subject their minds to years of discipline with the conviction that intense and sustained happiness can be found in knowledge.

A tiny minority, "spiritual" questers, try to find happiness by disciplining themselves in prayer, meditation or breathing to achieve "high" states of consciousness.

According to spiritual science all human activities are motivated by a separation from our natural state of happiness, a separation that gives rise to two apparently contradictory instincts, Fear and Desire, both of which extort and disturb the mind, producing many positive and negative emotions. **If happiness or unhappiness doesn't come from external objects, it has to be coming from me - If true....**

... Why do we feel happy when we achieve a goal or fulfil a desire?

Why does happiness seem to come from external factors, not within us?

Because the attainment of something (an "object** ") you desire/avoidance of something you fear temporarily removes the wall of fear and desire separating us from the internal source of happiness. When the dam bursts our lives are flooded with happiness, from the ecstasy of love to the satisfaction in a cup of coffee.

At this time, the mind associates the happiness with the thing that's desired/feared, rather than with the removal of the desire.

The idea that happiness was coming from the external object acted like a switch in the mind which erected a wall between the mind and your internal source of happiness, effectively cutting off contact with one's own unlimited reservoir of happiness/love. Because the process is unconscious and takes place instantaneously the love seems to

be coming from the external object, or an interaction with the object - but the object is only a catalyst, a trigger, that activates the inner switch.

The confusion about the nature of happiness and unhappiness with reference to external objects suggests that the question of happiness and unhappiness must be centred on me i.e. **myself (commonly referred to in Vedanta as the 'Self')**

Why is happiness so desirable to me?

When I think about it I can see that sometimes I'm happy and sometimes unhappy. **After careful consideration I can confidently conclude that happiness is natural to me because when I experience it I always cling to it.** And when I'm unhappy the reverse is true: I try feverishly to rid myself of it.

Swami Dayananda, is a Self-realised Vedanta teacher with 40 years teaching experience and a direct disciple of Swami Chinmayananda:

"If I cannot stand sorrow & agitation, my nature must be happiness, peacefulness. Otherwise why should I not stand sorrow? I should be quite at home with sorrow if it is my nature. But I am not. Thus, all I seek is my own nature. Whatever I seek I am."

*"...But if this is so, why do I miss it?... This is due to not **understanding** what I really am: i.e. the problem is Self-ignorance. Therefore the solution can only be*

Self- knowledge: And that is Vedanta."

Vedanta

"There is a teaching whose topic is the Self and its nature. This teaching is Vedanta which gives you knowledge of your own true nature.

...With this knowledge you find yourself free from all limitation and isolation."

Vedanta is addressed to those who are logically convinced that objects and activities will not bring lasting happiness. - Vedanta claims that the nature of happiness is who you already are . Vedantic texts goes on to explain how & why this is the case in a rigorous, logical manner which analyses all of life's experiences.

Vedanta is **not** something to be believed, it's something to be understood. All its teachings are directly and scientifically testable by you. Vedanta encourages you, in fact, to question its teachings - as this enables the student to learn more thoroughly. This eventually culminates in enlightenment/Self-Knowledge – a true understanding that your real nature is limitless, formless, happiness.

Further reading:

James Swartz - <http://www.shiningworld.com/Books%20Pages/HTML%20Books/Self-Knowledge.htm>

(Excellent written Vedanta teachings translated into everyday English.)

Swami Dayananda - <http://www.arshavidya.org/> .

Swami Chinmayananda - <http://www.chinmayauk.org/home.htm>

****Important Definition:**

What is an object? Vedanta divides the world into two apparently separate categories: subject and object. An object is anything perceived or seen by you...e.g.... physical forms, activities, sensations, feelings, thoughts, ideas, beliefs, opinions, memories, dreams, and states of mind...like desire and fear.