

# In Search of Happiness: In the Light of Indian Ethics

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**Abstract:** *The most desirable object in this world is obviously happiness. There may be different views regarding the origin, nature and class of happiness, but nobody can deny the happiness. The definition of happiness may differ from person to person and community to community, but the true happiness is that which brings happiness not only for oneself but for all. Happiness comes out if one lives a life with honor, justice and wisdom. And we can proudly say that a happy life is a Good Life. Different schools of Indian Philosophies have different interpretations of how to make life good and happy. Carvaka believed that happiness means bodily pleasure which comes through sense object contact. Jainism believed that happiness or kevala can be attained through these three jewels i.e. Right faith or Samyak darshana, Right Knowledge or Samyak Jnana and Right conduct or Samyak charitra. Buddhism believed that for attaining happiness we have to follow an eightfold path or ashtangika marga. The Bhagavad Gita teaches us that one can only attained happiness through sacrifice. Yoga philosophy tells us that in order to be happy we must be conquered our senses, body and mind. And for this we have to follow an eightfold path or Astanga yoga. Knowledge and the practice of knowledge is what we need for live a happy life.*

**Key Words:** *Happiness, Knowledge, Yoga, Liberation, Samadhi etc.*

## 1. INTRODUCTION:

The objective of this paper is to explore the Indian ethical tradition and their belief system about happiness. Different schools of philosophy define happiness differently. However they all accept that happiness is the ultimate end of our life and we all are working consciously or unconsciously for achieving happiness. In this paper I have been discussed the pleasure principle of Carvaka, three jewels or ways of Jainism, eightfold path of Buddhism for living a happy life, the Bhagavad Gita's teaching about duty and sacrifice which leads to the perfect life and Patanjali's Ashtanga Yoga for living happy life.

## 2. DISCUSSION:

Carvaka School believed that complete cessation from suffering is impossible in this life because the body is bound with pain and pleasure. Liberation is possible only after death, 'Maranam eva apavargah.' We cannot avoid the pain, but we can minimize the amount of pain by accepting the reality i.e. knowing that our existence is possible only with the body and we have to accept pleasure and pain because these two things are inseparable. A thing may give us pleasure at a particular time and at a particular circumstance. But maybe that thing can give us pain at different times and circumstances. Carvakas said, only fools reject the kernel because of its husk, reject eating fish due to bones, do not cook foods because beggars will come and do not sow seeds because of animals. A wise man is a man who accepts everything, he brings out tactfully the pleasure and moves aside the pain. We should take every opportunity of enjoyment in this life. It is uncertain that after this life we will get another life or not. The past is dead and the future is uncertain. Only the present and perceptible is true, and in your hand, so enjoy the present life. After death nothing will exist, enjoy the pleasure as much as possible which is attainable from the worldly objects. Hence, it is not that pleasure is the measure of all things: A good action is the action which brings pleasure and a bad action is which brings pain. The *Carvaka* concept of good and evil is based on pleasure. And for them the pleasure is the highest good.

Vatsyayana, author of Kamasutra a recognized Indian hedonist suggested that along with the bodily pleasure man should pursue the mental pleasure by the way of acquiring catuh sasti kala or sixty four arts. He accepted the three desirable ends of human life or Purusharthas viz. Dharma (virtue), Artha (wealth) and Kama (pleasure), out of these three dharma, and artha is treated as the means of attaining the ultimate end. Again he also told that harmony of these three purushartha namely Dharma, Artha and Kama is very much necessary for good life. These three should be followed in harmony.

Dharma, the social and spiritual discipline and Artha, the wealth is an instrumental end to achieve the ultimate end, the Kama or the pleasure. Vatsyayana believed that pleasure both bodily and spiritual is the only intrinsic value. Dharma and Artha are the instrumental value of achieving the pleasure or the Kama. Carvaka believed that society is for individuals, it has only instrumental value. Society is necessary only to protect and enhance the individual.

In Jain ethics it is believed that the aim of life is to achieve liberation of the soul. This can be achieved by following the Jain ethical code and living rightly by following the three jewels of Jain ethics. Right faith or Samyak darshana is doesn't mean believing what you're told, but means seeing, hearing, feeling, etc. properly, and avoiding preconceptions and superstitions that get in the way of seeing clearly. The second jewel is Right Knowledge or Samyak Jnana which means having an accurate and sufficient knowledge of the real universe. If our character is flawed and our conscience is not clear, knowledge alone will not help us achieve composure and happiness. Knowledge alone can help us to give us a happy life. the third one is Right conduct or *Samyak charitra* this means living your life according avoid doing harm to living things and freeing yourself from attachment and other impure attitudes and thought. Jainism believed that happiness or kevala can be attained through these three jewels.

Gautam Buddha popularly known as the Buddha or the Lord Buddha was born about the sixth century BCE. He is called the founder of Buddhism. He is called an ethical teacher because he thinks that being engrossed in philosophical and spiritual thought is nothing but a waste of time. Life is miserable; we should think about how to overcome it. We should search for the things or actions that give us the gift of a good life or a happy life. We have to perform those actions which lead us to peace, knowledge, enlightenment and nirvana. According to Buddha, life is full of misery and pain. In this current phase of life, we suffer at every turn. This path of cessation of sorrow or pain is called the Eightfold Path. This path is also called the middle path because it does not speak of indulging in physical pleasures and lust nor is it called asceticism or austerity. The middle path is the path between the two extreme paths i.e. physical pleasure and asceticism. Right faith or samyag dristi, Right resolve or samyag sankalpa, Right speech or samyag vak, Right action or samyag karmanta, Right living or samyag ajiva, Right effort or samyag vyamam, Right thought or samyag smriti and Right concentration samyag Samadhi. These are the paths of living a good life. The seeds of good life are hidden in these eight paths mentioned above. The attitude and the action that will come from the eightfold path will bring happiness not only to one person but to the whole society.

In Bhagavad Gita it is also said that for attaining happiness one has to perform prescribed duties but not to think about the consequence of the action and never consider himself as the agent of the action. Just do your duty keeping faith in God. And while performing duty it is better to perform the action which suits you. Every person has a different capacity and ability. A person must know in which action he fits best. We should not perform another person's duty which is not suitable for you. It is better to die in the discharge of one's duty, than to follow the path of another. Following another person's duties blindly is very dangerous. Furthermore, we have to know that senses are superior to the gross body, and mind is superior to the body and intellect is superior to the mind and the soul is the highest thing in the world. That is why we have to try to know the soul. When we are able to know the nature of the soul we will be able to know and live a good life. There are three gates of self destruction these are – lust, anger and greed. So if we want to live a good or happy life we have to abandon three things. We gain pleasure and pain when the senses and objects come into contact. These pain and pleasure are non-permanent and come and go like the season. One must learn to tolerate them without being disturbed.

Maharshi Patanjali was the founder of Yoga philosophy. Generally it is said that yoga means union, union between the individual mind and the spiritual mind. Yoga is a technique to control over the mind, body and senses. We know that our desire, sensual attraction and passion distract our mind and body, thereby we cannot concentrate in our works consequently we fall under depression and lost happiness in our life. So in order to be happy we must be conquered our senses, body and mind. And for this we have to follow an eightfold path or Astanga yoga viz: Yama, Niyama, Asana, Pranayama, Pratyahara, Dharana, Dyana and Samadhi. If we can follow these Ashtanga yogas, we can control our senses and body surely. Yama means abstention from injury or himsa by thoughts, words and deeds, abstention from falsehood or asatya, abstention from stealing or asteys, abstention from lust and greed, abstention from avarice or aparigraha. The second Ashtanga yoga Niyama means the norms which includes cleanliness of body, contentment, austerity, study and devotion to God or Isvara pranidhana. Asana means steady and comfortable posture so that one can comfortably do the actions. Pranayama means control over the breath that is inhalation, retention and exhalation of breath. Pratyahara means withdrawing of senses from their objects because our senses always run towards external objects. If do not control our senses then it is not possible to live a happy life. That is why the senses must be checked and directed towards the goal of life. The sixth Ashtanga yoga is Dharana, it means fixing the mind on the object of desire or meditation. Dhyana

means deep Dharana or undisturbed meditation on the desired object. Thinking or meditating on the object of desire without break. And finally Samadhi means pure concentration on the object of desire. This is the final stage of Ashtanga yoga. Here in this stage the object of meditation and the meditation become one. There is no separation between these two.

### **3. CONCLUSION:**

So, finally we have to say that a happy life is attainable and all we have the capacity to live a happy life. Practice and habit of doing good action is what we need to attain a happy life. We have to know our dharma first and then act accordingly. Kama and Artha are required but it should be directed by our dharma and knowledge. We have to control our sensual desire and this can be done through ashtanga yoga. When we can acquire the right knowledge we all of us are able to conduct the right action. A truly happy life can only be enjoyed when we all treat each other fairly and amicably, we are social creatures, we cannot be happy alone.

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