

Wellbeing, Happiness and Contentment: A Classical Indian Perspective

Sangeetha Menon

Professor & Head, Consciousness Studies Programme
National Institute of Advanced Studies
Indian Institute of Science Campus, Bangalore 560 012
(and, Council Member, Governing Council, Indian Council of Philosophical Research, Ministry of HRD,
Govt. of India;
Honorary University Fellow, School of Humanities, University of Exeter, UK)

Website consciousnessshop.com

Email <prajnanata@gmail.com>; <smenon@nias.iisc.ernet.in>

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For a discussion on the 'happiness' theories of the classical past of India there need to be a discussion on three foundational psycho-philosophical concepts that underlie happiness. These are: Desire, Self, and Contentment. Interestingly, this trio is also the psychological marker for determining wellbeing.

I will use concepts from *Isavasya Upanishad*, *Brihadaranyaka Upanishad*, *Yaksha Prasna* of the *Mahabharata*, and the *Bhagavad Gita* to enquire into the following questions:

1. Whose, and Which Self is seeking Happiness?
2. How is seeking happiness, having happiness, and being happy interrelated?
3. Is Desire that bad?
And, what is that we desire for, primarily?
4. Are all our acts inspired by selfish interests? Is there a place for altruism?
What is the meaning of having freedom of will and choice-making?
5. Is contentment resultant of having, giving, or giving up the 'giver' and 'taker' binary?
Is our core sense of self burdened by the fundamental duality of 'me-you' and 'me-other'?
6. Are happiness and self-transcendence antagonistic?
In other words, is it that existential pain is a necessary precursor for a state of (positive) transformation? What are *dharmic* values?
7. Is happiness a singular psychological state or is it a composite of several traits, dispositions, and contextual advantages?
8. Who is truly happy?