

Pursuit of Happiness:

The Path of Philosophy and Counselling

Dr. Suchitra Naik
Prof. Vedavati Paranjape

Pursuit of Happiness: The Path of Philosophy and Counselling

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Pursuit of Happiness: The Path of Philosophy and Counselling

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Chairman's Message

I take great pleasure in presenting this monograph containing research articles on the theme 'Pursuit of Happiness: The Path of Philosophy and Counseling'.

Activities promoting intellectual churning and academic interest have always been a part of tradition of Vidya Prasarak Mandal. Keeping with current trend K.G.Joshi College of Arts and N.G. Bedekar College of Commerce has decided to publish this volume of research papers. It contains 30 papers exploring the theme from different angles as well as some significant inputs of some experts in the field.

Human quest to remain happy and live a good life is age old. The state of happiness has profound impact on our lives. However, one may forget to actualize this quest in today's life full with materialism and hectic routines. Philosophy focuses on the concept of Eudemonia translated as good life. That means happiness here is studied and understood as a relatively stable state and not mere emotions. Stoicism holds that the key to a good, happy life is the cultivation of an excellent mental state, which the Stoics identified with virtue and being rational. To create this excellent mental state and rationality, help of Psychology and Counseling becomes a need. In recent years, Psychology has shifted its focus from illness to positive emotions. This Copernican turn, facilitated by Dr. Martin Seligman has opened several new possibilities of therapy as well as research. The school of Positive Psychology is gaining more and more importance as well as popularity.

This monograph has attempted to dwell on the theme of happiness and formulate new understanding of it from the lens of Philosophy and Counselling. It shall present different ideas related to happy, good and meaningful life through the research papers and articles of various scholars.

I congratulate the Principal and entire team working for this monograph and wish them success in this endeavour.

Dr. Vijay V. Bedekar
Chairman
Vidya Prasarak Mandal, Thane, Maharashtra, India

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Preface

*asato mā sadgamaya,
tamaso mā jyotirgamaya,
mrtyor mā'mrtam gamaya,*

(असतो मा सद्गमय ।
तमसो मा ज्योतिर्गमय ।
मृत्योर् मामृतं गमय ।)

From falsehood lead me to truth,

From darkness lead me to the light,

From death lead me to immortality.

Our age-old pursuit of happiness reverberates through this ancient Upanishadic prayer seeking for the path of truth, light and immortality. It also represents a belief that happiness lies in ultimate truth and enlightenment.

The state of happiness has profound impact on every aspect of human life. On the backdrop of today's rapidly changing socioeconomic environment, studying the concept of 'good and happy life' through the lens of various paradigms becomes more important. Thus, we chose the theme Pursuit of Happiness for this monograph to brainstorm, revisit and innovate different techniques rooted in Philosophy and Counselling which would help us make meaning of human life.

From the earliest days of civilization, philosophers across the globe have concerned themselves with the concept of happiness. Plato has written about his idea of happiness in 'The Republic'. According to him happiness is highest aim of moral thought and conduct or in other words those who live a moral and virtuous life tend to find greater happiness. He proposed such four cardinal virtues: wisdom, courage, moderation, and justice.

By way of answering the question 'what is happiness', Aristotle has presented the concept of Eudemonia, which can be translated as 'human flourishing and blessedness'. The Aristotelian conception considers happiness a supreme goal which provides purpose and value to all human endeavour. Aristotle implies that all desires are not worth pursuing; they might yield pleasure without producing wellness. This clearly distinguishes between mere hedonistic enjoyment and happiness found in the pursuit of actions that are worth doing and lead to virtuous life.

The Epicurean notion of happiness does not deny hedonism, it rather considers pleasure a chief good in life. But Epicurus' idea of pleasure is quite different. He suggests that pleasure is found in simple living, which is characterized by moderation in all things and avoidance of over-indulgence. It gives important place to knowledge, friendship and a cultured intellectually rich life. The Epicurean perspective is often referred to as 'serene hedonism'. It uses 'sober reasoning' to help people make correct choice of desires in life. Somewhat opposed to Epicurean thought,

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Stoics believe that happiness is nothing but virtue itself. They deny the idea of using virtues to secure pleasures. According to them, the key to happiness is cultivation of excellent mental state which is identified with virtue and rationality.

Following a unique path, Indian perspectives on happiness are spiritual in nature. Happiness (anand) signifies eternal bliss which is the result of liberation from the cycle of rebirths, i.e. moksha. This liberation is considered to be the ultimate form of happiness, which is truly stable and unaffected by worldly struggles. This perspective implies that happiness does not depend on objective conditions or 'reality' but is rather a subjective state. This transcendental view expresses concern for the entire universe, and wishes for the well-being of everyone.

In modern times, Dr. Martin Seligman has proposed a research-based concept of authentic happiness. His theory suggests that happiness could be analyzed in terms of three different elements - positive emotion, engagement, and meaning. These elements are not only well-defined but measurable in comparison to abstract concepts of happiness. Positive emotions include pleasure, warmth, comfort, ecstasy, etc. Engagement is in the 'flow', i.e. in being one with an absorbing activity (such as music). Meaning is the search for purpose in life. Human beings want meaning and purpose in life, which in turn may build greater joy. Several years before, Logotherapy- an existential philosophy based approach by Viktor Frankl has also emphasized the importance of finding purpose and creating meaning in life. According to Frankl the sense of meaning enables one to endure and overcome harrowing life situations while keeping the hope alive. Seligman's PERMA model of happiness adds relationships and accomplishment to the three foregoing elements. He proposes that there are techniques to increase each element, which not only makes happiness more attainable but more open to empirical tests. Seligman's work led to a major shift of focus in the field of Psychology from merely relieving human suffering to helping human beings thrive.

This monograph is an effort to bring together various models of happiness elaborated by different scholars. As we present this multi-dimensional thought on the concept of happiness, the following prayer from Brihadaranyaka Upanishad aptly summarizes our emotions:

Om, Sarve bhavantu sukhinah
Sarve santu nirāmayāḥ
Sarve bhadraṇi paśyantū
Mā kashchit duḥkha bhāgbhavet

(ॐ सर्वे भवन्तु सुखिनः
सर्वे सन्तु निरामयाः ।
सर्वे भद्राणि पश्यन्तु
मा कश्चिद्दुःखभागभवेत् ।)

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Acknowledgements

"How far that little candle throws his beams! So shines a good deed in a weary world."

- William Shakespeare

We would like to acknowledge the ample support and help we received in publishing this monograph. First and foremost, we are grateful to Dr. Vijay Bedekar, the Chairperson of Vidya Prasarak Mandal, whose guidance has motivated us to actualize this project. We express our sincere thanks to the Institute for Psychological Health (IPH), Thane and Department of Philosophy, University of Mumbai for their timely suggestions and support. We are grateful to Dr. Anand Nadkarni (Managing Trustee Institute for Psychological Health) and Dr. Anuradha Sovani (Professor and Head, Department of Psychology, SNDT Women's University, Mumbai. Trustee and Consultant, Institute for Psychological Health, Thane.) for their constant guidance.

We are indebted to Dr. Pradeep Gokhale and Dr. Michael Schulz for contributing articles to this monograph. We thank Dr. Sushma Poudwal and Dr. Ruchi Chaturvedi for reviewing the research papers and adding valuable insights.

We thank all contributors who have written for this monograph. We also express our gratitude towards the entire editorial team .

Principal Dr. Suchitra Naik

Ms. Vedavati Paranjape

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Varkari's Concept of Happiness: An Introspection

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Abstract

The Varkari Sampradaya is not simply an esoteric movement, but it derives its root in the devotion of the humble people of the towns and villages of Maharashtra. This pilgrimage is the display of the spiritual joy of the Varkaris; it is also a manifestation of the popular joy which expresses itself in the loud form naively. The pilgrims forget their mundane desires and worries and prepare themselves for a purer love of God or bliss

According to Varkari saint the Spiritual happiness is unrelative to an object rather it is self-attained, it is considered the best type of happiness. Spiritual happiness is superior to worldly happiness. One who experiences spiritual Bliss is unaffected by worldly happiness and sorrow. This is the real charter of the saint who is Sthitapradnya. For him, real happiness lies in ceaseless chanting of the name of Lord Vitthala who is the store house of all happiness.

In the state of ananda or bliss the jiva becomes free from all sins, all doubts, all desires, all actions, all pains, all sufferings and also all physical and mental ordinary pleasures. Having become established in joy of Lord Vitthala he becomes jivanmukta (a being free from the cycle of rebirth). This word Ananda denotes Brahman, the innermost Self, the Blissful One, who unlike the individual Self has no real attachments.

Thus, word 'Ananda' literally means bliss or Spiritual happiness. It signifies eternal bliss which accompanies the ending of the rebirth cycle. The Varkari saint who renounce the fruits of their actions and submit themselves completely to the divine will, arrive at the final termination of saṃsāra chakra to enjoy this eternal bliss (ānanda); where the bhakta did not seek union but tasted the God's love by being servant of the God through passionate commitment which is referred as bhakti, or devotion.

Varkari Philosophy is one of the masterpieces in philosophical systems, literature, poetry, metaphysics, science, spirituality, religion and yoga. It is also a real guide to live a contented life and let others also live happily. This paper tries to revisit the treasure philosophy of the varkari saints and explore the concept of happiness in their philosophy.

Keywords: Ananda (Spiritual Bliss), Varkari saints, Santsanga, bhakti, Lord Vitthala, Samsarachakra .

The Varkari Sampradaya is not simply an esoteric movement, but it derives its root in the devotion of the humble people of the towns and villages of Maharashtra. This pilgrimage is the display of the spiritual joy of the Varkaris; it is also a manifestation of the popular joy which expresses itself in the loud form naively. It is not an extrinsic end beyond, but rather the very heart of the pilgrimage; Pandharpur inhabits the journey from beginning to end. The Philip Engblom says that the journey of varkaris is more than just a means to attain the goal of darshan of Vitthal in Pandharpur. It is a significance of spiritual discipline. The pilgrims forget their mundane desires and worries and prepare themselves for a purer love of God or bliss. The followers hug one-another respectfully and make prostrations with love to all. This suggests that they treat one-another as the children of God, realising the deepest human-dignity. This is also suggestive of spiritual democracy, in which freedom and equality springs from the root source of compassion and belongingness to God.

Yaishnava recognizes Vithoba, the beloved of all the saints, as their 'Maya-Bapa' or 'Mother' and 'Father' (in one) and Pandharpur itself as their 'Maher' the maternal house of the bride the one and only home of all the saints. Lord Vithoba is associated more with compassion, an infinite love and tenderness for his bhaktas (devotees) that can be compared to the love of the mother for her children pining for the presence of his devotees the way a cow pines for her far-gone calf.

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According to Varkari saints the Spiritual happiness is unrelative to an object rather it is self-attained, it is considered the best type of happiness. Spiritual happiness is superior to worldly happiness. One who experiences spiritual Bliss is unaffected by worldly happiness and sorrow. This real charter of the sthithapradnya is found among Varkari saints. For them, real happiness lies in ceaseless chanting of the name of Lord Vitthala who is the store house of all happiness. The devotional lyrics of all these saint-poets are full of emotional love for God

In the state of ananda or bliss the jiva becomes free from all sins, all doubts, all desires, all actions, all pains, all sufferings and also all physical and mental ordinary pleasures. Having become established in joy of Lord Vitthala he becomes jivanmukta (a being free from the cycle of rebirth). This word Ananda denotes Brahman, the innermost Self, the Blissful One, who unlike the individual Self has no real attachments.

Thus, word 'Ananda' literally means bliss or Spiritual happiness. It signifies eternal bliss which accompanies the ending of the rebirth cycle. The Varkari saints who renounce the fruits of their actions and submit themselves completely to the divine will, arrive at the final termination of saṃsāra chakra to enjoy this eternal bliss (ānanda); where the bhakta does not seek union but taste the God's love being servant of the God through passionate commitment which is referred as bhakti, or devotion. This is well exemplified in one of the abhangas of Tukaram as follows:

हेचि दान देगा देवा तुझा विसार न व्हावा। गुण गाईन आवडी हेचि माझी सर्व जोडी न लगे मुक्ती धन संपदा। संत संग देई सदा। तुका म्हणे गर्भ वासी। सुखे घालावे आम्हासी। (Rahirkar, G.S., *Sakal Sant Gāthā*, p. 178, ab. 1238)

According to Varkari saints to know Him is to love Him, and this love offers the inspiration for carrying out noble deeds and the significant social service. Thus, philosophy of Varkaris has a great significance in the present day world.

Bhakti or Divine Love has been an important component in the religious and spiritual India. The ideal of life, according to Jnaneshvara is Bhakti or life Divine in this very life. The world being a divine manifestation, Jnaneshvara does not support renunciation like some others. He advocates that one should carry out one's duties in a spirit of worship. He strongly feels that every act should be performed with a sense of one's duty and with an attitude of prayer. He is a believer in Karma - the Work ethics. One should do one's work without aspiring for its returns for if one works with full faith, he will certainly get the fruits of the same. The following verse reveals this philosophy: 'कर्मण्ये वाधिकारस्ते मा फलेषु कदाचन' (Radhakrishnan S., *The Bhagvad Gita*, Chpt.2, Verse 47)

In saint Jnaneshvara's philosophy we find a happy harmony between Bhakti - divine love and Karma - work. Even though it stresses the feeling aspect of philosophy, it does not sacrifice the knowledge part and I feel this attitude is also responsible for a total change in the attitude towards the worldly things.

According to saint Jnaneshvara, the Absolute of Philosophy and the God in Religion are identical. The Ultimate Reality is pure consciousness, divine love and creative energy. Love is not something material. It is a living spirit, self-conscious and self-realizing. Every object in the world is significant to a devotee. For him, it is not a mere object of sensual enjoyment as a materialist would think but is the expression of Divine Love which is also the very source of his life. To Jnaneshvara, the Bhakti has the highest value not only from the human point of view but also from the point of Absolute Experience rather he considers bhakti as fifth purusharth. (Dandekar S. V. ed, *Sarth Jnanesvari*, 18-867, 'चहूँ पुरुषार्था शिरी भक्ति जैसी।')

Philosophy of Varkaris is rooted in the welfare of the whole of mankind and never in terms of any specific caste, creed or religion. They have always spoken about how the problems of the humanity can be minimised through divine faith and love. They considers every human being and every creature as a part and parcel of the God, and the soul being the same in all living ¹beings one must look to each

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other as if they are nothing but God. This principle of philosophical thought is well depicted in saint Jnaneshvara's abhanga which is as follows:

‘जे जे भेटे भूत ते ते मानिजे भगवंत हा भक्तीयोगु निश्चित जाण माझा’ (Dandekar S. V. ed, *Sarth Jnanesvari*, X-118)

The real nature of an individual is the same as that of God. Jnaneshvara has described this with beautiful similes. He finds the relation between the individual self the world and the God, more intimate, natural and real.

Our life is the medium through which Divine Love expresses itself. To realise this we require to unite the finite self with the Divine. This is the greatest thing to be achieved in life and it is within the reach of every human being, irrespective of caste, creed, gender, religion, time and geographical barriers. Sincerely if one follows one's own duties and responsibilities he can contribute for the welfare of the society. In addition, by controlling his passions like desire, lust, anger, greed, ego, temptation and jealousy, one can lead a happy and contented life. Also it will help to establish peace and harmony in society by reducing the tensions, and violence which have become rampant these days. Such controls help in keeping the family intact, which in turn moulds one's life. Varkari saints strongly believe in healthy, holistic society through a well knit family system based on mutual understanding and morality which has a spirit of sacrifice for one another.

It is further observed that all the thinkers, saints, sages, seers and the scientists have a common goal, i.e. the welfare and happiness of the humanity. All of them have spent their entire life in the quest for understanding the principles and laws of nature, life and ultimate reality. The scientists have always tried to invent and discover solutions to problems concerning the materialistic world and have stated the scientific laws and principles of nature in the form of equations and formulae of mathematical and physical sciences. But the saints, sages and seers who have been equally great visionaries, in their own way, have also expressed the very principles and laws of nature in the form of most poetic and lucid language.

At the end, if we look in retrospect, we find that the rule of law of any society or a nation must run close to the rule of life and the rule of life must run close to rule of Mother nature, because the rule of Mother Nature is the rule of Cosmos, it is the law of the Supreme, the Creator, the Brahman. In fact, this truly reflects the philosophy of Varkaris, which is true universally and for all times.

If one studies Varkari literature with full devotion and concentration, one will find that it is one of the master pieces in philosophy, literature, poetry, metaphysics, science, spirituality, Religion, Yoga and a real guide to live a contented life and let others also live happily. If the teachings of Varkari saints can form a part of the Education System, then it will create wonder among the students, to develop a feeling or a sense of reverence and respect and love in their parents, elderly persons, and teachers and towards other Human beings. Further, it will prevent the disintegration of families and breaking up of homes which have become quite common all over the world. Possibly, union of science and religion alone can bring peace and happiness to the world through the medium of education. This will help to build the men of character required for the holistic society.

If the international community of intellectuals, thinkers and leaders who shapes and guides the destiny of the world, decide to take up the task of establishing peace and harmony, then this is the time to put philosophy of Varkaris into practice by incorporating it in the Universal Education system, which is the dire need of the day. This philosophy can able to establish real happiness in the society; which is well expressed in the abhanga of saint Tukaram:

‘आनंदाचे डोही आनंद तरंग। आनंदचि अंग आनंदाचे काय सांगो झाले काहीचीयाबाही पुढे चालीनाही आवडीने। गर्भचि आवडी मातेचा डोहाळा। तेथीचा जिव्हाळा तेथी बिंबे। तुका म्हणे तैसा ओतलासे ठसा। अनुभव सरीला मुखा आला।’ (Rahirkar, G.S., *Sakal Sant Gāthā*, p.325, ab. 2326)

This will make saint Jnaneshvara's dream come true i.e. ‘अवघाचा संसार सुखाचा करीन’, where the Values and teachings of Varkari Sāmpradāya in contemporary times help us to bring changes in the

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world of materialism, terrorism and corruption. By imbibing the principle of love and devotion practiced by Vārkaris can make the universe a better place full of harmony and peace; where everyone can enjoy the bliss of life. This is well expressed in 'Pasayadan' the grand epilogue to the Jnaneshvari; where saint Jnaneshwar asks for the grace of God for the pursuit of welfare and happiness of people.

आतां विश्वात्मके देवे येणे वाग्यज्ञे तोषावे तोषोनि मज द्यावे पसायदान हे॥१७९४॥

May the Self of the universe be pleased with this offering of words and bestow His grace on me.

जे खळांची व्यंकटी सांडो तयां सत्कर्मीं रती वाढो भूतां परस्परें पडो मैत्र जीवाचे॥१७९५॥

May the sinners no longer commit evil deeds, May their love for doing good increase, and may all beings live in harmony with one another.

दुरिताचे तिमिर जावो विश्व स्वधर्मसूर्ये पाहो जो जे वांछील तो ते लाहो प्राणिजात॥१७९६॥

May the darkness of sin and evil disappear, may the world see the rising light of the sun of righteousness, and may the desires of all creatures be fulfilled.

वर्षत सकळमंगळी ईश्वर निष्ठांची मांदियाळी अनवरत भूमंडळी भेटतु या भूतां॥१७९७॥

May all keep the company of saints devoted to God, Who will shower His blessings on them?

चलां कल्पतरूंचे अरवा चेतना चिंतामणीचे गांवा बोलते जे अर्णवा पीयूषाचे॥१७९८॥

Saints are mobile gardens filled with wish-fulfilling trees, and they are living villages of wishfulfilling gems. Their words are like ocean of nectar.

चंद्रमे जे अलांछना मार्तंड जे तापहीना ते सर्वाही सदा सज्जना सोयरे होतु॥१७९९॥

They are moons without blemish and suns without heat. May these saints be the friends of all people?

किंबहुना सर्वसुखीं पूर्ण होऊनि तिहीं लोकीं भजिजो आदिपुरुखीं अखंडित॥१८००॥

May all beings from all the worlds be filled with joy, and may they worship God forever.

आणि ग्रंथोपजीविये विशेषीं लोकीं इये दृष्टादृष्ट विजये होआवे जी॥१८०१॥

May all those for whom this book is their very life should be blessed with success in this world and the next.

तेथ म्हणे श्रीविश्वेशरावो हा होईल दानपसावो येणे वरें ज्ञानदेवो सुखिया झाला॥१८०२॥

Then, Nivratinath, the great Master said that this blessing will be granted. This brought great joy to Jnaneshwara. (Swami Kripananda, *Jñāneçvara's Gītā a rendering of Jnaneshwari*)

This is the determination of all the thinkers and philosophers of the world. I am confident that they would be more successful in fulfilling this determination by the Jeevan Darçana philosophy of Vārkarī Vaiñāvism.

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