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RESEARCH ARTICLE

Approach to Happiness: A Philosophical Discourse

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Abstract: This paper explains the connection between mind, peace and happiness. The act of breathing is common to all living humans through which path to understanding the mind could be discovered. Virtues are revealed through level of purity in the mind. Happiness as experienced through such a mind is stable and unique. One must move towards understanding and acquiring this unique state of happiness. The purity is achieved through practice of yogic exercises of breathing known as Pranayama. The stages through which mind will evolve are well understood, so is the idea that philosophy has a role in creating a connect between the theory and practice of religion and rituals, which may make it possible for the mind to evolve itself to the said goal. The nomenclature may be any but the effect is to be found in all its subtle forms. The reference to *Patanjaliyogapradeep* (Omanandteerth, 1954) is more than necessary as it contains the knowledge and wisdom both through the experience of realized human minds.

Keywords: Happiness, Bliss, mind, Consciousness. Breathing rhythm (Pranayama), Vivek-Khyati

1 Introduction

Well-being is incomplete without happiness. Peace comes through happiness. The context of peace is also different in the political context as compared to the personal state. It is the mind which experiences peace. A lasting peace cannot be achieved without understanding the process of peace. To act in an ethically inclined way is possible after achieving mental control and identifying our crucial role in upholding the values without force or coercion. The dialogue around being ethical has remained quite inert because of lack of practice that leads to control of mind. How could one change the state of mind? Is there a possibility of bringing more purity in our mind? Certainly, the goal is not an unachievable ideal. Let us look at the idea of happiness.

1.1 Happiness, Values, and Gunas

What is happiness? The word 'happiness' as explored in *Patanjaliyogapradeep*, (Omanandteerth, 1954) a treatise on philosophy of yoga and comparative analysis of different schools of Indian philosophy, is about suggestions that require us to go through different stages of mind through our self- effort. Happiness is a state of mind reached by effort into an experience of bliss, is certainly very different from its connotation in the non-philosophical sphere or in the temporal world. Let us understand this temporal world as the physical and social realm in which all humans live. The superficial short-lived experience of satisfaction is what we think is an essential ingredient of such happiness. Whether happiness is an effect of satisfaction or the other way round is still not thoroughly understood. There are instances in life where we have to sacrifice something and yet feel a great sense of satisfaction but not essentially a sense of happiness. All of us are aware of such exceptional situations as observers or as participants in the game of life. Of course, our values are the guiding principles for choices we make. However, in the discourse in *Patanjaliyogapradeep* there are meaningful and achievable insights into how we should understand the idea of happiness. It is quite interesting to know that ignorance is the cause of our misery, something that scriptures have been postulating before setting out for ways to reach self-realization.

In the context of *Patanjaliyogapradeep*, the concept of happiness can be attained through practice. This practice requires us to know about three *gunas* (Datta, 2015) – Sattva, Rajas, Tamas and predominance of one on the other two. The predominance of one on the other two manifests in character of a being. Some questions must be asked here- what is the first mix of proportion of the three *gunas*? Is it chance or is that also dependent on something yet more subtle which only knowledge of Self can help us comprehend? However, from a chance state of experience of happiness to constant state of bliss is an entire journey of more than one life time. There are stages in which the mind lingers. The 'dharma' or the ideal abode of consciousness (Omanandteerth, 1954) is to stay in Sattva state. Both other *gunas*- *Rajas* and *Tamas* have to be abandoned so that the cit (Cit, referred here as the consciousness also understood as the mind) can be in Sattva state. In this state, the mental dispositions are only those that are conducive to cit gaining total cessation of thoughts and ideas. Rather, all mental dispositions are non-existent here. The *Prakriti* (Chatterjee Dutta, 2015) is a consequence of interaction of three *gunas*- *Sattva*, *Rajas* and *Tamas*. The mind that is in a balanced state is yet to move from the realm of unconscious to that of conscious. This process is a kind of effect, a change which happens continuously in the *Prakriti*. Whole creation is an effect of changes under the influence of the three *gunas*. As we understand the nature and the state in which the mind is, we are able to recognize and execute the steps that lead to concept of happiness. The Self as described in the Upanisad is blissful. *Upanisad are treatises on philosophical religious text of Hinduism containing knowledge of Brahman.*

The state of bliss is characterized by experience of happiness that gives us stability and a mind that comprehends things appropriately. The effort to understand true bliss puts us to a trajectory that picks up happiness as its inevitable companion.

2 Five stages of mind

According to *Patanjaliyogapradeep* (1954), there are five stages in which the mind is progressively identified. Each stage has its defining features distinguishing it from others. Let us examine the features of five stages of the mind:

2.1 Mudhawastha

This is the first state of cit or the mind. Ordinary English translation of this word would be 'old age' but the connotation here is very different such that no exact translation is possible. So, one has to understand the meaning of this state of mind in identifying its features. This state is dominated by *Tamas*. The other two *gunas* are embedded below in the mind. The manifestation of this state is found in a mind that shows inclination of desire, anger, greed and attachment. So, the literal translation of the word as 'old age' is not applicable here. It is in the sense of mind under the grip of afflictions that are far from desirable according to the appeal of a balanced mind. Such individuals are more into the pursuit of material things even if through and mostly through unjust, greed, selfish ways. Such people are ignorant and not evolved. This is not to say that their condition is justified. It is more important to understand that their condition will remain such if they do not begin to practice meditation to make their minds become more receptive towards dominance of *Sattva*. This will take time and practice as laid down in Patanjali's *Yogasutra*. Patanjali's *Yogasutra* is a text composed by Patanjali in 2nd century BCE or 5th century CE. The Yoga school of philosophy is based on this text. The idea of happiness in this stage is very superficial and evasive. The comprehension of the Self is far from attainable. So, one will keep bending outwards to seek the illusory happiness. The happiness is neither understood in its real form nor does it come to such minds. Virtues are difficult feat in this stage. The world is replete with such minds. It is a thought-provoking task to decide how to make people understand the role of self-effort in development of mind into progressive stages.

2.2 Kshiptawastha

The word is meant differently in the context of *Patanjaliyogasutra*. In English it is translated as a state of 'hurt mind' but in the *Yogasutra* its analysis is different. In this state of mind, the element of *Rajas* is predominant. The other two elements, *Sattva* and *Tamas* are embedded deep in the mind. This state is characterized by mental dispositions towards justice -injustice, attachment-detachment. Material gain-immaterial world. Actually, when *Sattva* dominates over *Rajas* intermittently, pure dispositions begin to make sense to the mind and when *Tamas* element dominates, the person gets deflected in the opposites of as many pure dispositions. The mental conflict keeps the person confused. He or she is still seeking happiness in the outer world. To be able to go near to the *Sattva* element more practice is required. We find as many of these individuals in the material world as there are from the previous category. There are moments of intellectual realization quickly taken over by replacement of other elements and their consequential dispositions. The whole effort should be about acknowledging the misplaced sense of priorities we have set in mind due to lack of effort and related ignorance.

2.3 Vikshiptawastha

The state here in normal parlance will be that of a deranged mind. But the connotation of this term is very different in our analysis according to the Yogasutra. In this state, the dominance of element of *Sattva* makes mind move towards purity of mental afflictions. For example, one wants to act for justice, duty, detachment, the immaterial world. But this state is also not the real state of mind or cit. The other two elements are pushed back but the element of *Rajas* surges up at times to make mind restless. However, the *Sattva* dominates in this state. Here, the mind experiences happiness which is related to the nature of self. The happiness is more in the form of satisfaction and bliss towards making mental dispositions dysfunctional to rest the mind in its natural abode. These three states are not real state because the mind is getting affected by the reflection of the material world on it. The material world is an interplay of three elements so the mind has to go beyond these three states. The happiness is somewhat felt and touched upon in the third state. This state is of those individuals who are curious to know more about the Self and try to take to practice that facilitates it. Many great evolved minds have been in this state.

2.4 Ekagrawastha

This word normally means concentration but in the context of Yogasutra the reference is that of a state in which there are no dispositions in the mind except of its own state, where elements of *Rajas* and *Tamas* disappear. There is no felt effect of *Sattva* element too. The mind has withdrawn itself into its own natural state untouched by the effects of *Prakriti*. In this state the individual has an absolutely shining pure mind. The mind can discriminate between the world of *Prakriti* and the pure cit. It can even see how the three elements interplay to produce consequences in the material world and how that world is distinct from the inner pure consciousness (cit). The highest level of this state is called vivek-khyati (Chatterjee Datta, 2015). It is the power to discern the separation of the realm of purusa and prakriti. a high stage of evolution of the mind through practice of pranayama as mentioned in patanjaliyogapradipika. The difference between *Prakriti* and *Purusa* is realized in this state.

2.5 Nirudhawastha

Cessation of all mental dispositions is achieved in this state. They are done away with. The cit or mind is in its pure original form in this state. The difference between *Prakriti* and *Purusa* is already fathomed before so now the cessation of all dispositions lead to Asamprajnata Samadhi. It is a high state of consciousness in which only subtle impressions stay. (Omanandteerth, 1954). The states of mind described above are a steady way to move from one to the other. The practice mentioned as means to traverse the path is of pranayama (Omanandteerth, 1954). Pranayama is a set of breathing exercises controlled to purify the mind of various afflictions as prescribed in patanjaliyogapradipika. Patanjali's Yogasutra has laid down the effect of pranayama which is a set of breathing exercises which develop into a rhythm such that the mind starts becoming pure. The purity of mind is not so easily achieved. It requires a constant effort.

3 Six afflictions of mind

A list of six afflictions are given in Patanjalyogapradipika. It is essential to understand these six afflictions in the human mind irrespective of the religion or culture that it belongs to, to be able to reach the happiness which is selfless and pure in nature. What is even more interesting to know is that all human minds are in the grip of these six afflictions so a sense of human common condition is discovered in areas of consciousness related ideas and behavior.

1. **Attachment:** This potential in the mind leads to an affliction of its own kind. The good times are not let go off. Linger in its comfort the mind wants to hold on to it and gets disturbed with imminent changes in it.
2. **Jealousy:** This is an affliction which makes mind restless. The misery increases with jealousy and actions under the impact of jealousy create false sense of satisfaction momentarily only to regret later.
3. **Revenge:** There is a way to take revenge by acts of speaking ill of others or hurting them. This kind of affliction leads to more edgy mind.
4. **Faulty Other:** The potential in the mind to find faults in others is another way to clog the mind with misery.
5. **Anger:** The anger in mind is a wasteful sentiment which is harmful. It is well known that anger has gained a metaphor of 'an enemy within'.
6. **Retaliation:** The hatred which stirs up the desire to retaliate is partly because of the humiliation one feels and partly because of the egocentric approach one has. Spiritually, for peace, retaliation is a potential of human mind that needs to be controlled. It makes us uneasy and misbalanced.

The state of happiness at the worldly level demands from us a way to control these six afflictions described above. The fact that they are described as impurities in the mind requires that they must be purified. Breathing exercises purify the mind. Pranayama is that exercise which has the power to purify the mind.

4 Understanding the consciousness

It is important to note that the cit or consciousness has two simultaneous activities going within it. One is the constant breathing and other is the desire. If we purify the mental afflictions through pranayama the desires also get regulated and controlled. The peace or the desire for peace will come gradually but at the exterior, one has to be aware of how much synergy there is between the 'natural' state of mind and the 'operative' state of mind. Theories of consciousness are still trying to find more about this gap. Happiness is not a concrete object so we have to set the mental forces in right direction for mind to function so as to experience the real spirit of happiness. Many of our actions are just eyewash in the hope of getting a happy feel. For example, indulging in luxuries, going to any end to get what we desire without being appropriately guarded against the instinctive onslaught and so on. A way to deal with regulation of these afflictions is also about social training which all of us must begin with. The social training may help in identifying our problem areas. In seeing others happy one should feel as if happiness belongs to me as well. Jealousy, greed or hatred are going to make one more miserable because of further impurities that are released in the mental sphere. When someone is purposefully criticizing us to affect

our confidence and self-esteem, we must become numb to such attack, as an act of revenge or retaliation is a sign of wasteful impurity being encouraged at the mental level. We only perpetuate such sentiments within the mind and disturb the balance within us which we need for our own happiness. The purity of mind is about understanding the afflictions within us treating them as a sign of our own stagnant spiritual stature. Those who act under the influence of mental afflictions or impurities have to go through the consequences also so the infinite struggle continues to exist for such minds. There is one more issue that needs to be addressed here, Awareness of the constitutive nature of mind as explained above is not about preaching ethics or specifying religious affiliation. It is a way of life for the entire humanity. If the generations to come and even the present ones, are to be exposed to such possibilities it can be only through practice. The concept of education must expand itself on the foundation of this idea and highlight it. The political structure must set examples to make its effect plausible. As an organic whole we need more substantiation of the above principles possible through practice only. The mind gets better and better unfailingly. No one can deny that the happiness is a close companion of the mind. There is a humungous task set out for the philosophers now. They must be able to connect the common threads laid down in any practical guide of different religions that can mark out the concept to the minds of all practicing religions to be able to understand where the politics of religion is failing us. The idea of morality and culture are closely related. If the clarity on religion can be carved out to the seekers, a whole lot of new ideas of dealing with different minds could be achieved. The evasive idea of peace will no longer be out of reach. To think more seriously about sustainability of human welfare it is the mind which must treat itself of various afflictions described above to function for the good of humanity. At the practical level, we identify the goal according to our limited comprehensive abilities which will go on as we make effort to widen our vision. Ultimately each one has to come to certain social comfort to identify ways of progress of a unique kind. Psychology is continuously striving to know the ways of human mind. The approach given in *Patanjaliyogapradeep* is helpful in seeing the spectrum within which the mind operates at a given point of time in life. The response at the mental level will be always known to us whatever situation we are thrown in. That is the means to know our distance from the natural state of a balanced mind. It shows we are failing our own selves. Everything else becomes secondary. In the philosophical pursuit of understanding happiness, we become aware of our own identity and role towards self-evolution. This is no small realization even theoretically.

5 Conclusion

Mind and consciousness are inextricably related. It is quite significant that happiness is a part of the interaction between mind and consciousness if it has to be stable. Virtues are to be cultivated through control of mind. A sure way to reach perfect state of bliss is through practice of pranayama towards vivek- khyati to understand and go beyond to discern the separation between the world of Purusa and Prakriti. It is not to state that happiness and virtues are only achievable through the Indian philosophical work of Yogasutra as described here but the concept can be meaningfully understood once the stages and operation of the mind is grasped. It is only then that a purpose is set in the mind of a seeker. Any other method which helps in putting the operations of mind as clearly as described above is going to be equally effective for the names are not significant as much

as what is identifiable process alongside that name. In fact, as philosophers, we need to draw comparisons between flourishing living religions to highlight the concern reflected here.

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