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The Seeds of Happiness



Izvor Collection



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Chapter One

HAPPINESS: A GIFT TO BE CULTIVATED

Human beings come into the world with certain aspirations; they need to love and be loved; they need to know, and they need to create. And it is the fulfilment of these aspirations that they call happiness. Before they can fulfil their aspirations, however, they need to add something more to the baggage they bring with them, for it is not enough to want something in order to obtain it. They want to love and be loved, but they find themselves alone and disappointed. They want to understand everything, and they understand very little and are continually confused and disorientated. They want to create, and they manage to produce only monstrosities. In order to achieve all their aspirations, they are going to have to complete a long apprenticeship under an instructor who is qualified to lead them on the path of true love, true understanding and true creation.¹

All human beings want happiness, but they don't know how to go about it. They don't even

know that there is work to be done and a discipline to be observed in order to obtain it. They think that just because they are here on earth, they only need to eat, drink, sleep, earn a living and bring children into the world, and they should automatically be happy. But animals do pretty much the same things, so what is the difference? To be on earth is no guarantee of happiness. If you want to be happy, there are a certain number of things you must do... and a certain number of things you must not do. Happiness is like a gift, a talent, and it has to be cultivated. It is exactly the same as with an artistic talent: if you don't cultivate it, it will never amount to anything. Even if someone has a tremendous gift for music, painting or dance, for instance, it will never develop into anything worthwhile if he does not work at it seriously every day.

If you want happiness, don't just sit there and do nothing about it. You must go out and start looking for the elements that nourish it; and as these elements belong to the divine world, that is where you have to look for them. Once you find them, you will love everyone and everything and be loved in return; you will understand things better, and you will have the power to create and achieve your aspirations.

Note

1. See *What is a Spiritual Master?*, Izvor Coll. n° 207.

Chapter Two

HAPPINESS IS NOT PLEASURE

The need to find happiness is very profoundly rooted in every human being. It is this fundamental need that drives them and guides their actions. And even though each individual envisages happiness differently depending on his own particular temperament, most people think of it as pleasure, for happiness is always accompanied by pleasure. So much so, in fact, that most people fail to distinguish one from the other. They imagine that whatever pleases, attracts or interests them will make them happy. But that is not so; if you analyse pleasure and see what it really is and how and where you find it, you will soon see that the question is far more complicated.

When you consider how much energy human beings expend on activities that give them pleasure, it is obvious that if happiness were synonymous with pleasure the whole world would be overflowing with happiness. But what we see is just the opposite. The things that give human

beings pleasure are very often the things that bring them unhappiness.

Pleasure is a brief and very agreeable sensation which leads you to believe that if only you could prolong it indefinitely you would be happy. This is an illusion. Why? Because the activities that give you an agreeable sensation quickly and effortlessly almost never belong to a very high plane. They concern principally your physical body; they have little to say to your heart, and practically nothing to your mind. But no human being can be happy if he seeks to satisfy only his physical body, or even his heart and mind, for such satisfactions are necessarily incomplete and transitory. Happiness, unlike pleasure, is not a fleeting sensation; it is something that concerns the whole of one's being.

He who thinks he will find satisfaction in pleasure is like an alcoholic. When he pours a glass of wine or spirits down his throat he feels on top of the world. He forgets all his cares and concludes that drinking is a magnificent pastime. Yes, it may seem magnificent if you consider only the first few minutes or hours of euphoria. But what about the effects that will make themselves felt a few years hence? The gradual loss of his mental faculties, the incapacity for a normal social or family life, a loss of reputation, even a recourse to crime. Yes, in many circumstances, people behave like confirmed drunkards; something gives them

pleasure for a moment, and they conclude that it will continue to do so forever. But unfortunately they will eventually begin to see all that they have lost and all the damage they have done, and then they will suffer.

The same thing applies when it comes to choosing a friend, a marriage partner or a business associate. People tend to be guided by their instinctive likes or dislikes, their first feelings of sympathy or antipathy. They think, 'Ah, I like the look of that fellow,' and without reasoning or examining the question any further, they go into partnership with him. Only later do they find out that they are in partnership with a crook. And, by the same token, they will often reject a good, just and honest man simply because they don't like the look of him. As long as people continue to be guided by their spontaneous likes and dislikes – which are no more than the impressions of a moment – rather than by wisdom which is so much more far-sighted, they will continue to act foolishly and hurt themselves.¹

Initiates and sages warn us about the reality of things. They say, 'Be careful about what you choose to do: once the first moment of satisfaction has faded, you will have to pay dearly for your shortsightedness.' So many things are pleasurable for a short time, but what about the long term? For a few minutes of pleasure snatched here and

there, you will have to endure years of suffering. This is why you must be vigilant and always a little distrustful of things that seem very pleasant.

It is true that certain pleasures can nourish the soul and spirit, but these are not the pleasures that human beings are most inclined to choose. Besides, it is always dangerous to be guided by pleasure, for the things that give men pleasure are usually the things that feed their instincts, not their souls or spirits. You only have to see what those things are: eating, drinking, sleeping with anyone who is willing, gambling, eliminating their business rivals, revenging themselves and so forth; the possibilities are almost infinite. But where is all this leading them? Certainly not in the direction of happiness, for happiness is something vast, something infinite, whereas pleasure only reaches a very small part of man, the paltry, selfish part that belongs to his lower nature.

In seeking pleasure, man is thinking primarily of himself, for his pleasure is himself. He is not thinking about anyone else's pleasure, only his own. And because he often has to resort to dishonourable means in order to obtain and defend his pleasure, he diminishes and defiles himself and becomes unjust and cruel to others. If anything deprives him of his pleasure, even momentarily, he is immediately irritable, aggressive and vindictive. So where is the happiness he professes to find in these things?

Other people find him unbearable and make no bones about letting him know it.

To be sure, I am not saying that you have to deprive yourself of every satisfaction and every pleasure; that would be stupid. It is nature herself, after all, that impels human beings to seek pleasure; without it life would lose all meaning and become indescribably dreary and monotonous. It is pleasure that animates and lends colour to life, so there is no question of wanting to do away with it. The only thing is that it must not have first place in your considerations; you must not make it your goal. On the contrary, the natural inclination for pleasure must be used constructively.

We all have instincts and desires, that is normal, but it is no reason to give in to those instincts and do only what gives us pleasure. If heaven has given us a brain, it is so that it may steer us in the right direction. A human being is like a ship sailing on the ocean of life. Below-decks is a crew of ordinary seamen whose job it is to keep the boilers stoked so that the ship can keep moving, and at the helm is the captain, who has a compass which enables him to keep the ship on course. The stokers are our instincts and appetites; they are blind, but they provide the power to keep us moving. And the captain is our intelligence, the wisdom at the helm that steers our ship in the right direction and makes sure that it does not strike a rock and sink or

collide with another ship. Unfortunately, many of the human 'ships' we see are sinking because their captains have allowed the crew to do whatever they pleased.

Bitter disillusionment awaits those whose judgement and behaviour are ruled by the pleasure principle, for they cannot foresee the future consequences of the choices they make today. Reason, not pleasure, should be your guide, for reason can tell you exactly where each step in any direction will take you, and it will warn you: 'Careful! That way lies danger.' or 'Go ahead; you're on the right path.' If you talk to people about this, you will discover that, unfortunately, most of them are convinced that they can fulfil themselves only by doing what gives them pleasure. In fact, they are ready to flout every law and every 'taboo,' as they say, in the process. They want to be free. But what is this freedom they are asking for? The freedom to commit every imaginable folly and even to destroy themselves. For when someone frees himself – as he thinks – from light, wisdom and reason for the sake of a few moments of pleasure, the inevitable result is suffering. Suffering even on the physical plane. He will fall ill, for illness is simply the physical manifestation of a disorder that has been allowed to take hold on the psychic plane.

There is nothing wrong in wanting to overthrow the prejudices and restrictions of a rigid moral

code in order to be fully oneself; on the contrary. But it is essential to realize that there are other moral laws on a higher plane than those of man. These are the eternal laws laid down by cosmic intelligence, and whether we like it or not, anyone who transgresses these laws will have to pay the penalty in grief, suffering and illness.² As I have been telling you for a long time: it is easy to foresee that mankind is going to suffer from all kinds of new diseases because of the way human beings use their freedom. And some of those diseases will be incurable.

Of course, cosmic intelligence is not so cruel as to condemn anyone immediately for the least little fault. Someone who is too fond of food, drink, tobacco or sexual pleasure, for instance, may fall ill only after years and years of over-indulgence. But it is still a foregone conclusion that if his behaviour does not change very rapidly, he will not escape the scourge of illness. The physical organism of someone who oversteps the mark in whatever sphere is like the framework of a house that is being eaten away by woodworm: it is not destroyed from one day to the next but, after years and years, the whole house suddenly collapses. Many things in life are like that, and as people don't understand how the laws work, they base their reasoning on too short a period of time. They say, 'Look at this man, here. He's honest, sensible and kind, but that

hasn't done him any good. Whereas that one, over there, is a confirmed scoundrel and succeeds in everything he does.' And they conclude that it is to their advantage to be a scoundrel. This is the philosophy that prevails in the world today: people can see no further than the end of their nose.

In reality, if you want to understand how the laws work, you have to be able to observe beings and events over a long period of time. A brief segment of time is not enough; it does not give you the elements you need to form a judgement. Look at how things work out in the history of a country, for example; it is only after centuries that you can see exactly how a country gradually fell into decadence. Those who lived through that decadence could not see what was happening. And the same holds true for human beings. We may not always be able to see the consequences of our actions, whether good or bad, in our present incarnation; we may have to wait for our next incarnation.

Yes, unfortunately – or fortunately perhaps – man's happiness does not lie in doing exactly what he pleases, as and when he pleases. As I have said: happiness is not pleasure. Be careful, therefore; don't let yourselves be deceived. A great many people who have always thought it normal to respect certain rules of conduct first begin to defy those rules because others scoff at them and

tell them that they should liberate themselves from such ridiculous nonsense. Eventually, they are so 'liberated' that they come to a very bad end.³ And this happens to so many people who believe themselves to be highly intelligent. Their lives end in disaster. And not only their own lives, but also the lives of all the naïve and gullible people who follow them. You all know the parable in the Gospels about the blind man: if the blind leads the blind, both will fall into a ditch. Yes, but this is a very frequent phenomenon. So many scholars, philosophers and thinkers proclaim all kinds of theories that are completely absurd, and yet everybody follows them. Whereas, in spite of the fact that Initiates can explain the very foundations on which life is built, people refuse to listen to them; in fact, they flee from them. Why? The reason is simple; it is because the things that Initiates talk about are never particularly agreeable. They talk about laws, reason, wisdom and self-control. Even about sacrifice. Whereas others talk about desire, pleasure and passion, and naturally everybody finds this more to their liking. Yes, but what an Initiate tells you is really and truly for your good. Perhaps not for what you consider to be your good, now, at the moment, but for your long-term, ultimate, eternal good. The only trouble is, of course, that you cannot see this. You are blind. And this is real blindness: to see only the present moment and the

immediate gratification of a desire, a need or an instinct, instead of seeing a more distant future.

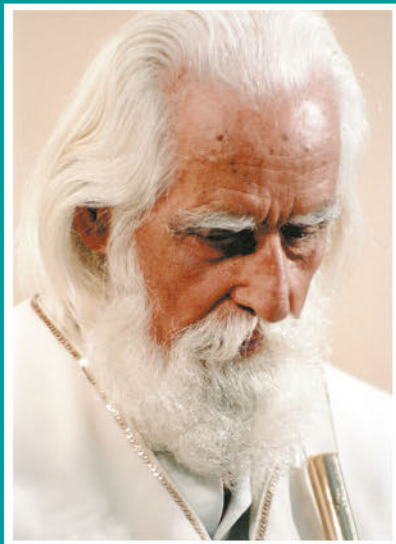
I realize, of course, that these explanations may not be suitable for all; we have to allow people to seek happiness in their own way. Everyone is sure to find a few crumbs to stay the pangs of hunger. Nature is so generous and open-handed. She has left a few titbits in all kinds of places; even in rubbish bins – figuratively speaking. Why should those who are incapable of finding nourishment elsewhere be forced to die of hunger by being deprived of the only kinds of food for which they have an appetite? Of course, they will perhaps make themselves ill with the food they choose, but what can anyone do about it, if that is the only kind they want?

And what about those who sense that fulfilment and happiness lie elsewhere, and who truly desire to seek them out? They must be given the help they need. They must be told, ‘It is very difficult to obtain happiness, true happiness, but it is not impossible. It takes a great deal of work, a great deal of will-power, and above all a great deal of discernment. You have to understand that what most human beings call ‘happiness’ amounts to no more than a few moments of pleasure and gratification; a mere semblance of happiness. If you want to embark on the long and painful path that leads to true happiness – and once you have

obtained it, to give it to others – then you must look for it off the beaten path; in things other than pleasure.’

Notes

1. See *Love Greater Than Faith*, Izvor Coll. n° 239, chap. 10: ‘Base your trust on vigilance’.
2. See *Cosmic Moral Law*, Complete Works, vol. 12.
3. See *Freedom, the Spirit Triumphant*, Izvor Coll. n° 211, chap. 7: ‘Freedom through Self-Limitation’.



The distinguished philosopher and spiritual Master, Omraam Mikhaël Aïvanhov came to France in 1937. Although his work deals with many aspects of initiatic science, he makes it clear that: 'Each one of us must undertake his own self-development, but only if his goal is not solely for himself, but for the good of the collectivity. Then, the collectivity becomes a brotherhood. A brotherhood is a collectivity where true unity reigns, because by working on himself, each individual is also consciously working for the good of the whole.'

'Happiness is like a ball: you keep kicking it and running after it, and just as you are about to catch it, you kick it again... and start running after it all over again. Yes, it is the chase that stimulates you. It is in the quest, in the pursuit of a goal that you find happiness.

When you get something you want, of course, you are happy for a little while, but that satisfaction is soon followed by a feeling of emptiness, and you start to want something else. Your satisfaction never lasts. So what is the answer? The answer is to set out in pursuit of the farthest and most inaccessible goal: perfection, immensity and eternity. In pursuing this goal, you will find all the things you desire: knowledge, wealth, power and love. Yes, you will find these things without even asking for them.'

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