

## Editorial

# HAPPINESS AND CONSCIOUSNESS

What makes life happy and successful? What is the meaning of life? These were the questions that had been disturbing all cultures from time immemorial. The evidence of it can be found from the excavations of Indus valley civilization, in which an ancient statue of a yogi dated way back in 9000 BC depicts that man's search for happiness is a genuine need and it is to be found within each individual. No external factor can provide happiness to humanity. The ancient Indian belief and understanding was that health and happiness are connected with mind or psyche rather than the accumulated wealth or material goods. In the Upanishad it is clearly indicated that man's consciousness has deeper roots and happiness is defined in terms of the spiritual pursuits which are beyond the non-existence, ignorance, darkness and death. Existence, wisdom and eternity are clearly envisaged in the *Brhadaranyaka Upanishad*. In the West, especially in the Greek culture, *Eudaimonia*, was often translated as happiness or the indwelling good spirit and the human welfare became the hall mark of human existence which was discussed by Socrates, Plato and Aristotle and even endorsed by Epicurus though Epicurean followers were mere pleasure seekers. For Socrates it was only through the practice of virtue one could achieve happiness. However for Plato, it was the guidance of the emotion, appetite and spirited parts or the rational soul or mind that was essential for achieving happiness. Aristotle on the other hand greatly emphasized

the rational activity manifested through the good deeds that would lead to happiness rather than power or honour. In the Aristotelian ethics and political philosophy, virtue, excellence and happiness became the foundation and goal of human life. In today's scenario wholeness and wellbeing is the yardstick for a happy, contented and fulfilled life.

What parameters can be used for measuring happiness and health in our human existence? Or are they mere creation of our own consciousness? Whatever maybe the context, the following examples clarify our doubts. Muniba Mazari is an art executive and a motivational speaker from Pakistan. She successfully overcame her own adversities by converting them into opportunities. While travelling from Baluchistan to Karachi by car, she met with a very serious accident that caused her multiple injuries. She was confined to a hospital bed for two and a half months. To her great dismay, she was told that she is paralysed for the rest of her life. The very thought of having the Wheel chair as her life's companion send chills down through her spine. This traumatic revelation left her numb from within for a while. However, Muniba was not a person to be defeated by adverse circumstances of life. She fired her own 'Will power' from within and challenged herself with a strong determination to pick up the broken strings of her life with a never defeat attitude. She wanted to own her life as a normal and courageous person rather than beg for mercy. With self introspection she unleashed the hidden potentials and found that she could paint. She started painting and became a successful artist. She was hired by a reputed company to be a script writer and painter. She did not confine her mind with that success story alone. She became a motivational speaker showcasing her life as a model with a strong message that no misfortunes can stop her in attaining happiness and success. She proved that wheel chair is not a weakness but strength in reality. She became a talk show host on TV and revealed to people how to convert their own adversities into strength and opportunities. She says that there are embarrassments like getting hold of a water bottle in the middle of the night when she is thirsty because she needs the assistance of somebody to get the water bottle. However, she became aware that there are many other talents latent within her and convinced herself that she could accomplish whatever she wanted to achieve in spite of the adversity. Therefore today, she is grateful to the Almighty for the lessons learnt through

pain caused by the accident. She aims at higher goals as some inspirational speakers claim as 'sky is the limit'. Muniba is not the only person who challenged her own inadequacies but there are many other such inspirational leaders from history, to name a few Helen Keller and President Roosevelt are well renowned. Likewise many other great humans who have converted their adversities into opportunities are living even today as a model for modern generation. Another living legend among such great personalities is none other than Nick Vujicic who was born without hands and legs. Against all these odds he became a smiling young man, inspiring people through imparting positive message of how to live a contented life despite the absence of many faculties of the body. The same way Itzhak Perlman, a great violinist who was affected with polio shows us how to live successfully and achieve happiness. There was a memorable event that happened when he was playing violin during a concert. He was tuning his violin just before the concert in New York. All on a sudden one of the strings of the violin had broken with a thud sound and everyone thought either he would bring a new violin or replace the broken one! But instead he closed his eyes for a few seconds and played the violin striking the audience with awe. After playing melodious music for a while he stopped and looked at the wonder struck audience and said! "I was trying to find how much music could be made with this handicapped violin". This polio affected, world renowned violinist conducted a stunning concert with a three stringed violin, and there was standing ovation by the audience. He was reminding us through this incident that each one should try to be happy with what is available and make the best music out of one's own life. There might not be always the best opportunity available. It is left to us to make the best music with what is available. Anita Moorjani was afraid of many things including the killer disease cancer. When diagnosed with cancer she fearlessly fought the disease with her positive vision. She is back into normal life and now inspires many people through her writings and lectures. "Dying to be Me: My Journey from Cancer, to Near Death, to True Healing" Moorjani describes the power of healing latent within the body and mind. The power within, latent in each one of us, is what Muniba Mazari and Nick Vujicic illustrated through their celebrated lives. Lama Mathew Ricard, Lama Kelsang Nyema and his Holiness Dalai Lama and numerous other spiritual masters would also explain to us that often health and happiness are our own psychic constructions.

Ilya Prigogine, the physicist, Nobel Prizewinner, illustrates the same truth about nature. Friction is part of the physical nature while frustration is part of the psychological nature. Both are everyday experiences. What matters is how we look at it. When an uninterrupted river finds a huge stone blocking its smooth flow, it could react in two ways; either it goes sideways of the stone continuing its uninterrupted flow or forcefully push the stone using its available kinetic energy. Ilya Prigogine, a Belgian physicist received Nobel Prize for the discovery of this fundamental property of friction and how nature resolves the friction through the inner dynamics known as dissipative structures. Mountains, rivers, continental plates, pearls, birds, fish; animals and humans all encounter frictions and resolutely resolve them. Friction has the quality of fragility, vulnerability and a capacity for being shaken up which could totally overhaul the total system. This is beautifully christened as growth, change and modification. Any structure irrespective of atomic, molecular, chemical, biological, psychological and social dimensions, if isolated from disturbance, friction and frustration is indeed isolated from change. Thus, anything isolated become stagnant and therefore dead. Thus the imperatives of creation and evolution, life and growth are the absolute acceptance of friction and frustrations and consider them as opportunities. This attitude makes the change and modifications in one's life possible. A successful encounter of friction and frustration will definitely lead to creativity, wholeness, wellness and happiness. When a challenge is encountered the whole system is activated and try to resolve it leading to an intertwining of the whole sub-systems taking account of the future of the system. This inbuilt tendency is brought out by the study of Prigogine and this is also true about human beings in its individual and collective measures. This successful encounter of friction and frustration leads to sustainability and creativity. Making life beautiful is the key to happiness and success.

Today everyone wants to be happy and is obsessed with acquiring happiness through following some methods of meditation or practices. Companies, spending millions, advertise their products assuring the customers that these things will definitely provide them happiness. As an example, Coca Cola is promoted through the slogan, 'open happiness' while Pepsi not to be outweighed came up with 'the happiness exhibit'. French Mustard assures that 'happiness starts here' while Adidas advocates 'share happiness'. Ice company Custard asks

'what flavour is your happiness?' while Hershey Chocolate requests having 'some more happiness'. The Internet Company Comcast affirms that 'happiness is only a power button away' while Nivea advertises their lotion with 'happy sensation' and body wash cream with 'touch of happiness'. Business Companies are organizing seminars and workshops with themes like 'happiness culture', 'happy hiring' and 'happy sales'. We are bombarded with the slogans like 'be happy and smile' and 'happiness is a choice and you decide'. There are slogans describing that the dynamics of happiness is within you and need not search it elsewhere. 'Happiness is an inside job' and 'happiness is living life from the inside out' and it is not the absence of problems but it's the ability to deal with them. Slogans like 'some pursue happiness' while 'others create it'. There are also motivating statements 'there is no path to happiness because happiness is the path itself' and 'there is power in positivity'. In order to be happy, be your own sunshine, affirms that you can create happiness within yourself and it is not to be sought after anywhere else but within oneself. A write up on a T-shirt was really striking, 'You are the key to happiness' expressing the importance of achieving happiness relying on one's own consciousness.

I have seen my own mother managing her stress, emptiness and depression in a unique way. She was fond of birds and animals. Whenever she felt low in spirit, she would take some feed for the chicken or the pigs or the cows and saw them joyfully peck them or munch them and showing their gratitude by raising their heads. She will speak to them with gestures and actions having a meaningful conversation. After being with them for half an hour, often I have seen her as refreshed and happy and was able to throw away the problems that were haunting her. Among some of my western friends I have found that they would go into the woods when disturbed and as they walk along, nature seems to speak to them which cure their stress and strain. When mind is concentrated on the beauty and power of nature, that process will enable them either to tackle the problems intuitively or refresh them to solve the issues in an unprecedented way. Recent research studies conducted on people who walk or stay in touch with nature often, show metabolic changes. The measurements show that the stress level is reduced and the heart beat has come down to normalcy. They feel better because of the release of the chemicals like serotonin, dopamine in the brain through the changes

in the perception and the context. Therefore science and technology today, shows that being in the lap of nature has a profound impact on our brain and behaviour, enabling us to reduce anxiety, and increase creativity, contentment and happiness. A study conducted by David Strayer of the University of Utah, USA observed that people are mentally and physically healthy and happy when they are interacting or being with nature. So nature can make us more compassionate, healthier, happier and creative. A Japanese experiment conducted on people who walk in the forest by studying their heart rate variability, blood pressure, mood changes, stress levels and other psychological measures showed that they have lower heart rates, better moods and less anxiety than the people who walk for exercise in the city itself. In Finland, another study conducted on urban dwellers who walked in the urban park or the woodland found to be more relaxed than the city walkers. In 2015, Gregory Bratman of Stanford University randomly assigned 60 participants to a 50 minute walk in either a forest or in a city centre. Before and after the walk, their emotional and cognitive states were measured. The researchers found that those who walked in the woods had less anxiety, less focused on negative aspects, more positive emotions and better performance on memory tasks, compared to the urban walkers. An extension of the study for 90 minutes walk supported with MRI studies indicated that there are decreased rumination and increased activity in the subgenera prefrontal cortex. These studies suggest that nature improves our efficiency and happiness levels. So when there is a burnt out feeling or fatigue, better turn towards nature because it can refresh you. So being with nature brings creativity and awareness or in short nature empowers you to have a feeling of well being.

The second issue of the Journal for Transformation of consciousness thus, discuss the topic on happiness, wellness, wholeness and Consciousness. The famous phenomenological philosopher Maurice MerleauPonty through his illustrious book, *The Phenomenology of Perception* argued that it is the perception of the consciousness that is being projected on the object and makes it aesthetically reasonable or enjoyable to the person. One of the horrible experiences of the human history was the extermination camps organized by the Nazis in the Second World War. Violence, hatred, inhumanity, anger, hunger, disease, hopelessness all prevailed in those camps. Victor Franklin, an Austrian neurologist and psychiatrist who

was a collaborator of the renowned psychologists Sigmund Freud and Alfred Adler fused his *Logotherapy* in the crucible of this harrowing experience. The article "Suffering, Context, Consciousness and Happiness: Logotherapy of Franklin." elucidates the underpinning history and assumptions of *Logotherapy*. Etty Hillesum, an intelligent but ordinary Dutch citizen who was also exterminated in the concentration camp was able to behave cheerfully and gracefully in the horrible context with love and concern for the others by strongly believing in God. Etty had undergone a transformation through the application of the Jungian psychoanalysis from the chaos and irrationalities she was plagued with. They teach us how to respond and not to react in such drastic situations though such grave occasions may not arise so frequently. The article "From Turbulence to Transformation through Love: The Inner Landscape of Etty Hillesum" describes how Etty managed to find meaning in love towards God and fellow human beings even in extreme situation where the animal instincts would be breeding its horror. Victor Franklin speaks of the meaning of life as the core of *Logotherapy* and the sustainment of life is based on finding the meaning. The meaning at times he explains as love through his own survival in the Concentration camp by remembering about his wife and talking to her in fantasy. However, Etty gives a clear and distinct account of this meaning in her life through love and how she anchored in God and extended the love she experienced with God through the loving actions in the face of death itself. Franklin and Etty are thus complimentary and mutually enrich each other. Dr. Petra Vogler, a philosopher and cultural critique interviews Anna-Maria Stegmaier, the Director of the Victor Franklin Institute in Germany. Through this descriptive interview, Dr. Vogler brings out the salient features of the Logotherapy and how it could be useful as a tool for transformation. Dr. Mathew Maniyampra CMI, Professor of Psychoanalysis at Dharmaram Vidya Kshetram, Bangalore, examines the necessity of an integrated psycho-spiritual synthesis for an integrated consciousness which only will lead to wellbeing, wholeness and happiness. Shamanism is a growing interest in the present context in several cultures and digging deep into the ancient cultures that practiced shamanism from psycho-spiritual perspective, scholars discover new approach to healing and well being. Dr. Amar Dhall, doctor of law from Australia, and a practitioner of Shamanism in Brazil, Peru and Australia delves deep into the dynamics of contemplation for well being for the individual and the society.

Ernest Rossi and Kathryn Rossi connect consciousness, the problem of qualia, hypnosis and quantum electro dynamics through their well researched article "The Quantum Electrodynamics' Field Theory of Naturalistic Hypnosis, Brain Plasticity, Behaviour and the Qualia of Consciousness and Happiness". "The Role of the Lorentz Transformation in the Evolution of the Integration of Mind-Body Hypnotherapy with Mathematics and Physics" by Dr. Bruce Gregory explains how Lorentz transformation and quantum entanglement could be employed to enhance trust, safety and depth in the treatment of trauma and addiction.

A case study on the fear of death eliminated by hypnosis is elaborated by Puja Shah, a budding researcher in psychotherapy. Developing new hypnotherapy tools based on technology is developed by Prof. Jacob Raju, a well known hypnotherapist and family counsellor. Vivek Kumar through the article titled "Who am I? Maharishi's Philosophy of Self" delves deep into the question of the self and body and the philosophical underpinnings of the dynamics with the spiritual insights of ShriRamana Maharishi.

In the Consciousness in action section, I want to introduce two institutions serving a larger section of the society in Kerala as well as nationally and internationally. Francis Mahieu a business man turned Benedictine monk from Belgium dreamt of integrating Indian spirituality with Benedictine spirituality that is deeply rooted in the Catholic Church. Francis came to India in 1958 and established the integrated spiritual centre near Wagamon, now known as Kurisumala – Mountain of the Cross. Meditation, spirituality and labour are the basic pillars of this community in transforming the individual. Ann-Ida, herself a community member of the Holy Trinity in Rattvick, Sweden writes about how silence, meditation, work to transform the individual to higher states of consciousness. She lived with the community for a few days and was touched by their spirit of integration. Sunny Vettom is an entrepreneur who has a wider vision to serve humanity and thus became instrumental in the hands of the Supreme Consciousness in establishing a centre in Kudayathoor where people who lost energy and hope could come and recharge themselves. Nausikaa a well known traveller evaluates her experience in this valley cum mountain resort through the article "A Travel from the Valley of Hope towards the Mountain of Happiness". She recommends how



silence and beauty of nature can recharge a depressive mind to happiness and wholeness. “The Blueprint of Personality Models of Mind – A New Paradigm Integrating Consciousness and Behaviour” is a joint article written by the well known hypnotherapist and researchers, Ulf Sandstrom, Fredrik Praesto and Anna Hildenbrand Wachtmeister from Sweden who after years of treating trauma and mental illnesses develop a new model for consciousness.

Happiness is indeed a creation of consciousness and it can be achieved at any circumstance. Nature, ecology, beauty, love, God and the company of fellow human beings can all contribute to the creation of happiness, wellness and wholeness. Being positive and creative, let our consciousness may enable us to discover happiness and wholeness though whatever be our contexts.

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