

As always, there are a few things missing from these notes, but this was a truly inspiring talk.

Brother Sattvananda  
Happiness  
SRF Greenfield Retreat

Even if misdirected, a desire for happiness is a desire for God. For most people, happiness is conditioned on what is going on externally. It's see saw living. If the supervisor is negative, we go down. If he is happy with us, we go up. If the train is late, we go down. If we are on time, we are happy. Things like this happen many times in a single day that make us go up and down like a see saw. After a few thousand lifetimes, we get tired of this. We need a different approach. Guru gives us a different approach. Our Guru tells us that happiness is our nature. Meditation is a pick axe that allows our inner joy to come to the surface.

We praise what gives us happiness externally and give ourselves the right to be happy. The way we are is conditioned for a lifetime. We don't know how to manifest it at will. ("Teach us to find the hidden river of bliss, hidden behind the rocky soil of our difficulties. "(MM) Practice happiness. I tried to remind my mom of this when she was on a diet. Finally, she threw up her arms and said, "I'm happy to be starving." In times when things are very difficult in my life, in meditation, Master's bliss comes. Look at this little fella, the little ego. You are not touched by this. Then I believe it. One experience like that helps us to understand true happiness.

It is unwise to rely on external happiness. The world is not designed to give us permanent happiness. Life always has complexities. We need that suffering to make up for a year of happiness that doesn't depend on externals. We pursue happiness how? The Declaration of Independence talks about the pursuit of happiness as a right. The inner pursuit of happiness is where we detach ourselves from the drama of life. We just do our best and offer these efforts to God. It is legitimate to want our kids to be happy. We must keep perspective. We have to take life as it is. It will never give us permanent happiness.

Win or lose, we become stronger through adversity with our spiritual work. Rachel Raymond, a therapist, tells story of a seventeen year old boy diagnosed with juvenile diabetes. He was devastated the change in his life style that was required. He was very frustrated and didn't take it well, expressing the rage of a trapped animal. He began using the diabetes to hurt himself over and over again. After six months of therapy, nothing had worked.

After six months, the boy had a dream. He was in a hole with no ceiling. The sky was above. In front of him was a statue of a smiling Buddha- more his age. He looked at the Buddha's peaceful smile, and for the first time started feeling a sense of peace. Then, from behind him, a knife fell through the heart of the Buddha. The boy asked the Buddha, "Why is it like this? " The statue started to grow up. It got bigger and bigger till the face changed and it was up to the ceiling. The knife got smaller and smaller, until the knife was like a little thorn on the Buddha.

What is the meaning of suffering? We grow as we face suffering. Sometimes we don't even understand what we are facing. If we look from a distant perspective, we say, "I'm stronger than that." If we don't learn how to respond, we will not be happy. We deal with both happiness and suffering. If we give suffering a meaning, we ask, "How can I face this circumstance to express the best of my Self?" It is not a matter of winning or losing. Sometimes we lose. There are some lessons we can only learn on our knees. Part of being a happy individual is being able to face suffering without being crushed by it. No one has accomplished anything worthwhile when they were only happy.

Live a simple life. Materialistic desires will keep coming. Master recommended plain living and high thinking.

A man from another country was visiting an amusement park. He told his friend, "Boy, you Americans need a lot of things to be happy.' It is better to pursue Him than the will 'o wisp of desire.

St. Therese of Lisieux said it is up to us to decide what we need to be. My grandparents suffered during the war. In the older years they lived very simply, making meals, having dinner, playing cards, laughing. They didn't

need much.

Guru said, "He that findeth his life shall lose it. The man who foresakes earthly happiness for divine joy will find earthly happiness to...."

A Taoist philosopher said, "As long as you chase happiness, you'll never have it. When you stop obsessing about happiness.....then you will have peace. "

Ask what's the right thing to do when we are peaceful, then we do the right thing. A man looks for the right person. He is looking for the one. When he finds her, and marries her, a few years later he asks himself, "Why didn't I see this?" His mind was clouded by the obsession, "I have to have her. " The Taoist said "Then you will find peace and with peace, happiness." Cultivate happiness. Be optimistic. The secret to happiness is having a good sense of humor and a bad memory.

Master said external circumstances act as a pick axe in our own consciousness. The more we are aware of the good things in your life, the more holes we have of happiness.

If you find yourself stuck in traffic, don't despair. Remember, there are people who are unable to drive, who cannot afford cars. A person may be in a bad relationship with a person who doesn't know what it is like to love, and he becomes the victim or the other's smallness and insecurities. Things could be worse. You could be one of them.

When postulates struggled with depression, Brother Premamoy told them, "If we are moody or unhappy, the best thing to do is to go out and make someone else happy." We need to get out of our self-centeredness. If we shutter the door inside ourselves, we forget happiness.

Live life with courage. What happens if you've been hit hard? Remember, the first quality of the Bhagavad Gita is fearlessness. That's how Maya gets us. It makes us insecure and fearful. With fearlessness, we have faith in God and his protection. Remember, God won't permit anything to happen that I'm not ready to face.

Having that meditation and a guru makes it easier to feel peace. Brother commented on how beautiful and peaceful Greenfield is. Swami Vivekanda traveled all the way to Switzerland to meet Dr. Max Mueller because he had praised his guru, Sri Rama Krishna. He said it is like a pilgrimage.

Br. Troy noted that when we come here, it's like a pilgrimage, for the monks too. You all are some heavy devotees.