



The Concept of Happiness in Bhagwat Geeta: An Indian Perspective

¹ Dr. Swati Mishra

Government Model Degree College, Bulandshahr

Abstract

Bhagavad Gita is the most influential classic scripture among all doctrines and philosophies. This paper aims to explore the nature of happiness in Bhagavad Gita and offer a deeper perspective on the recent field of this emerging research. In the Bhagavad Gita, Sri Krishna counsels the Arjuna surrounded in the mire of illusion through dialogue and discussion endowed with divine knowledge that contains a path of happiness, contentment, and inner peace. Happiness does not lie in the objects of enjoyment because happiness is a state of mind. Happiness is a pleasant emotion made out of contentment, love, joy, inner peace, and fulfilment. Bhagavad Geeta describes happiness in so many different ways Ananda, sukha, the path of Tri guans, etc.

Keywords: Happiness, Ananda, Sukha, Path of Tri guans.

Introduction

Bhagavad Gita is an unprecedented gift of Hindu mythology to the world. Bhagavad Gita does not need any intro of relevance because of its uniqueness. However, Indian mystics have been guided by a philosophy of this holy text since ancient times. There is an indispensable demand to revisit the great philosophy of Gita for a sound mind, expansion of inner power, being more resilient, and happiness.

The plot of the BG is conducted amid a fratricide battle, where the mighty warrior Arjuna is perplexed at the pesto situation of fighting his own relatives and preceptors. In this situation, he resorts to the instructions of Krishna, his relative and friend, who later was recognized by himself as the Supreme (Prabhupada, 1972).

For a better understanding of how the notion of happiness permeates the BG, the texts below are ordered in the following groupings: Arjuna's Questions; Happiness captured by the senses (outside); Happiness Experienced by the spirit (interior); Relation of happiness with the gunas, or archetypes of behavior.

Notably, the word happiness was taken in the BG Through the original Sanskrit Sukha or related terms (Sukham, Sukhi etc.). In some texts it was not translated as happiness, but similar terminologies, such as pleasure, etc. We used the translation of the texts by Winthrop Sargeant (2009). Although we use a single term in Sanskrit (Sukha) This was not always translated by the word happiness, assuming other similar meanings, such as pleasure (Es), Beatitude, and pleasant.

What is the purpose of our life? What do we want to achieve? What is it that we crave for? It is happiness. We may be keen on performing certain actions and indulging in certain activities because those, we think, will make

us happy. But, are we aware of the true meaning of happiness? Sri Krishna enlightens us about this elusive concept through his conversation with Arjun in Bhagavad Gita.

In Chapter II, Verse 70 of the Bhagavad Gita, Sri Krishna says,

**आपूर्यमाणमचलप्रतिष्ठं
समुद्रमापः प्रविशन्ति यद्वत् ।
तद्वत्कामा यं प्रविशन्ति सर्वे
स शान्तिमाप्नोति न कामकामी ॥ 70॥**

Just as the ocean remains undisturbed by the incessant flow of waters from rivers merging into it, likewise the sage who is unmoved despite the flow of desirable objects all around him attains peace, and not the person who strives to satisfy desires.

The ocean is unique in its ability to maintain its undisturbed state, despite being inundated by the incessant flow of rivers into it. All the rivers of the world constantly empty themselves into the oceans, which neither overflow nor get depleted. Shree Krishna uses the word *āpūryamāṇam* (filled from all sides) to describe that even the rivers pouring all their water during the rainy season into the ocean cannot make it flow over. Similarly, the realized sage remains quiescent and unmoved in both conditions—while utilizing sense objects for bodily necessities, or being bereft of them. Only such a sage can attain *śhānti*, or true peace.

Happiness by the senses

**ये हि संस्पर्शजा भोगा दुःखयोनय एव ते ।
आद्यन्तवन्तः कौन्तेय न तेषु रमते बुधः ॥ 22॥**

The pleasures that arise from contact with the sense objects, though appearing as enjoyable to worldly-minded people, are verily a source of misery. O son of Kunti, such pleasures have a beginning and an end, so the wise do not delight in them.

Human being senses create sensations of pleasure in contact with the sense objects. The mind, which is like the sixth sense, derives pleasure from honor, praise, circumstances, success, etc. All these pleasures of body and mind are known as *bhog* (material enjoyment).

Pleasures are finite, and hence the feeling of deficiency remains inherent in them. One may feel happiness on becoming a millionaire, but the same millionaire becomes discontented on seeing a billionaire, and thinks, “If only I also had one billion, then I too would be happy.” In contrast, the bliss of God is infinite, and so it gives complete satisfaction.

Worldly pleasures are temporary. Once they finish, they again leave one with the feeling of misery. For example, an alcoholic enjoys the pleasure of drinking alcohol at night, but the next morning, the hangover gives him a splitting headache. However, the bliss of God is eternal, and once attained, it remains forever

Experienced by the Spirit (Internal happiness)

In the Bhagavad-Gita, there is one verse in the 5th chapter, the 21st verse. It says:

**बाह्यस्पर्शेष्वसक्तात्मा विन्दत्यात्मनि यत्सुखम् ।
स ब्रह्मयोगयुक्तात्मा सुखमक्षयमश्नुते ॥ 21॥**

Those who are not attached to external sense pleasures realize divine bliss in the self. Being united with God through Yog, they experience unending happiness.

A liberated person is not attracted to a material sense of pleasure but is always in a trance enjoying the pleasure within. In this way, the self-realized person enjoys unlimited happiness for he concentrates on the Supreme.

In this verse, told that we need to direct the search for happiness inward rather than out to this world, the world in which being find ourselves. It has to become an internal quest where being are actually in touch with our true identity.

Happiness with the Gunas

In the Bhagavad Gita in chapter 18, Shri Krishna says to Arjuna about the three types of happiness.

**सुखं त्विदानीं त्रिविधं शृणु मे भरतर्षभ |
अभ्यासाद्रमते यत्र दुःखान्तं च निगच्छति || 36||**

now hear from Me, O Arjun, of the three kinds of happiness in which the embodied soul rejoices, and can even reach the end of all suffering.

The ultimate motive behind people's actions is the search for happiness. Everyone desires to be happy, and through their actions, they seek fulfillment, peace, and satisfaction. But since everyone's actions differ in their constituent factors, the kind of happiness they derive out of their work is also different. Shree Krishna now goes on to explain the three categories of happiness.

1. Satvik or Pure happiness: -

**यत्तदग्रे विषमिव परिणामेऽमृतोपमम् |
तत्सुखं सात्त्विकं प्रोक्तमात्मबुद्धिप्रसादजम् || 37||**

That which seems like poison at first, but tastes like nectar in the end, is said to be happiness in the mode of goodness. It is generated by the pure intellect that is situated in self-knowledge.

The Indian gooseberry (*āmlā*) is a super-food that is very beneficial for health. It has the Vitamin C of more than 10 oranges. But children dislike it since it has a bitter taste. Parents in North India encourage children to eat it, "The benefits of both these—eating of *āmlā* and the advice of the elders—are experienced in the future." Interestingly, after eating the *āmlā*, in just a couple of minutes, the bitter taste disappears and sweetness is experienced. And the long-term benefits of consuming the natural Vitamin C are undoubtedly numerous. In the above verse, Shree Krishna says that happiness in the mode of goodness is of the same nature; it seems bitter in the short run, but it tastes like nectar in the end.

It is the happiness that arises from the elevation of the soul. However, attaining this is not easy. One pursuing satvik or pure happiness has to practice a lot of discipline. That is why, it feels like poison in the beginning but nectar in the end.

2. Rajasik or result-oriented happiness:

**विषयेन्द्रियसंयोगाद्यत्तदग्रेऽमृतोपमम् |
परिणामे विषमिव तत्सुखं राजसं स्मृतम् || 38||**

Happiness is said to be in the mode of passion when it is derived from the contact of the senses with their objects. Such happiness is like nectar at first but poison at the end.

Rājasik happiness is experienced as a thrill that arises from the contact between the senses and their objects, but the joy is as short-lived as the contact itself and leaves in its wake greed, anxiety, guilt, and a thickening of the material illusion. Even in the material realm, it is necessary to reject *rājasik* happiness for meaningful accomplishment. As a

reminder to steer him away from immediate but misleading joys, India's first Prime Minister, Jawaharlal Nehru, used to keep these lines from the poem, Stopping by Woods on a Snowy Evening, on his desk:

The woods are lovely, dark, and deep,

But I have promises to keep,

And miles to go before I sleep,

And miles to go before I sleep.

The path to lasting and divine bliss lies not in indulgence, but in renunciation, austerities, and discipline.

3. Tamasic or slothful happiness: -

**यदग्रे चानुबन्धे च सुखं मोहनमात्मनः |
निद्रालस्यप्रमादोत्थं तत्तामसमुदाहृतम् || 39||**

Happiness which covers the nature of the self from beginning to end, and which is derived from sleep, indolence, and negligence, is said to be in the mode of ignorance.

Tāmasīc happiness is of the lowest kind and is foolishness from beginning to end. It throws the soul into the darkness of ignorance. And yet, since there is a tiny experience of pleasure in it, people get addicted to it. That is why cigarette smokers find it difficult to break their habit, even while knowing fully well it is harming them. They are unable to reject the happiness they get from the addiction. Shree Krishna states that such pleasures—derived from sleep, laziness, and negligence—are in the mode of ignorance.

Conclusions

In the Bhagavad Gita happiness derived from a combination of the senses and the sense objects is always a cause of distress and should be avoided by all means. Happiness is a state of mind and has nothing to do with the external world. The intuitive discrimination is saturated in patience with the mind absorbed in the soul of the yogi, feeling his mind all thoughts will by slow degrees attain tranquillity.

The three modes of happiness explained in the BG satvik or pure happiness is the happiness that arises from the elevation of the soul. However, attaining this is not easy. Pure happiness has to practice a lot of disciplines which is why it feels like poisons in the beginning but nectar in the end. This kind of happiness arises from the serenity of one's mind.

Rajasik or result-oriented happiness is the materialistic pleasure that is derived when the senses come in contact with external objects that create a feeling of gratification. However, this kind of happiness is temporary.

Tamasic or slothful happiness is the lowest form of happiness and is derived from sleeping or being lazy. The soul is never nurtured through these practices yet since there is a tiny sense of pleasure associated with it people wrongly consider it to be a state of happiness.

Bhagavad Gita explains that true happiness is within one's mind whatever we sense happiness from the external world it is temporary.

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