

# Real Happiness – In the context of World Happiness Report

An article by Sundar Sarukai in THE HINDU

*While searching articles for MindCET, I came through a beautiful article showcasing the real meaning of happiness and what it has become in today's modern world of consumerism.*

Real happiness isn't a product that can be sold. It arises from being one with the world.



In a recent UN report, Norway was declared as the “world’s happiest country”. The top of the list included Denmark, Finland and Iceland. The U.S. came 14th and the U.K. was in 19th position. Given the everyday stress and the alienation from social life that defines life in the U.S. and U.K., all I can say is that this World Happiness Report cannot really be about happiness. (Disclaimer: This

claim has nothing to do with the fact that India was ranked 122nd in this list.)

Happy days are here again!

Very often we use the word happy to denote something which is not happiness at all. There are a number of terms that are often used in place of happiness: pleasure, joy, contentment, satisfaction. Not all of these correspond to happiness. These are particular types of experience which overlap with the experience of happiness but are in themselves not the state of happiness.

The famous anthem of happiness, Bobby McFerrin’s song ‘Don’t worry, be happy’, was a song which had global appeal. The song has a very simple prescription for being happy: don’t worry since worrying only doubles your trouble. “The landlord say your rent is late/ He may have to litigate/ Don’t worry, be happy,” sings McFerrin. Is the state of not worrying all that there is to happiness? Perhaps not surprisingly, McFerrin took his anthem from an Indian spiritual guru, Meher Baba.



The contemporary way to forget worries is through shopping. Happiness is only another commercial product. Happiness as a product makes it possible for it to be designed, packaged and delivered when and where needed. Our society is full of products, most of which are designed primarily to make us ‘happy’. Not a surprise that shopping is the easiest route to happiness today.

Happiness as accumulation and consumption of goods, as a kind of product that can be sold, is endemic to modern definitions of happiness. I remember the catchy and popular slogan “Happy days are here again, Thumbs Up”, a theme which has



experience of happiness when you listen to music or see the mountains is not akin to a psychological state of joy or the pleasure of the senses. When a parent sees her child, the happiness she gets is not in the sensual pleasure of seeing that child but in something more. Happiness is more than pleasure or joy since the poor do not find any pleasure in being poor but in spite of it they find moments of happiness.

The happiness associated with love is a good example. Love may not always be joyful and pleasurable, it may not even be pleasant all the time but the moment of happiness that defines that love is indeed real and rare. Living in constant comfort does not lead to happiness, it can only lead to boredom.

What then is the nature of happiness? It is one which arises from the removal of ego and from being aware that there is no real difference between an individual and the world.

Happiness is just in 'being-with' somebody. It is the state where knowledge, artificial distinctions and utilitarian values do not figure. Happiness is the state where it is not possible to distinguish between the person who is experiencing and the object of experience. This is also the state of surrender — to another individual, to nature or to the divine.

Surely, this is not the happiness which the UN report refers to nor is it even part of the world view of the culture of the countries high up in the list. To find something close to this notion of happiness, they would have to walk the streets of societies in which people still happily smile through the rubble of their everyday world.

Contributed by:

**Tarun Mittal**

**Junior Manager (U&S)**