Dharma, Happiness and Living With Purpose

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I Was 12 Years of Age, Woke Up from a Nap and Was Blind

St. Columba’s High School
New Delhi, India
1961
A Long Distance Call to my Father ...

Dr. K.L. Chopra, FRCP

Dharma (धर्म)

- Right Action
- Duty
- Ethos
- Moral Compass
- Authenticity
- Truth
- Vocation
At age 16, I was fortunate enough to enroll in this prestigious Medical School.

My wife to be, Amita, stood first in the entrance exam (10,000 students applied for 35 open seats).

I also stood first …. on the waiting list!

I was on my way to fulfilling my Dharma.

The Story of Laxman Singh and Smallpox Inoculation

For me, this story captures the meaning of Dharma.
Let’s talk about Happiness

**Happiness**: The sensation of feeling good, being pleased, an internal experience in which the good will is expressed outwardly, extending the positive feeling towards others.

**Joy**: Experience of extreme happiness, euphoria, a temporary but intense and exuberant sensation.

**Bliss**: The experience of intense joy, anchored by a sense of connectedness with others and with nature (perfect happiness, great joy)
Meaningful Experiences Surpass Expensive Possessions

Future, Present, and Past

- Anticipating an upcoming vacation
- While on vacation, being in the present and enjoying every moment
- Reminiscing about a meaningful experience from the vacation: awe of natural beauty, connectedness with friends, laughter
Lottery winners…  
What happens to them a year later?

Spinal cord injury and paraplegics…  
What happens to them a year later?

I’m not living the life I thought I would lead…but it does have meaning, purpose. There is love. There is joy, there is laughter.

Christopher Reeve
Joy

I slept and dreamt that life was joy.
I awoke and saw that life was service.
I acted and behold, service was joy.

Rabindranath Tagore

Socrates (469 – 399 BC)

- Claimed that his wisdom and insights arose merely in “knowing that he knew nothing.”
- Argued that happiness is not just bestowed on a select few but could actually be begotten by human endeavor.
- Happiness and virtue are inextricably linked.
- Eudaimonia in Greek means “human flourishing”
Traits of Happy People

1. Happy people have a cadre of good Friends (chosen family).

Friends … they cherish one another’s hopes. They are kind to one another’s dreams.

Thoreau
“A friend is a gift you give yourself.”

Robert Louis Stevenson

Friendship is always a sweet responsibility, never an opportunity.

Khalil Gibran
The Happiness Grant Study

75 years in the making and still ongoing...

- Social connectedness brings forth joy
- Close relationships equate with health, longevity, and happiness
- Satisfaction with relationship at age 50 are correlated with health and happiness at age 80

George Valiant
Triumph of Experience 2012

Traits of Happy People

2. Happy people have the ability to Forgive.
You Can’t Be Happy if You Harbor Resentment

• When asked if he harbored resentment against his captors, Nelson Mandela, who had been imprisoned for 27 years, answered:

> Resentment is like drinking poison and then hoping it will kill your enemies.

“As I walked out the door toward the gate that would lead to my freedom, I knew if I didn't leave my bitterness and hatred behind, I'd still be in prison.”
The weak can never forgive. 
Forgiveness is the attribute of the strong.

A Third Trait

I don’t know what your destiny will be, but one thing I am certain of. The ones amongst you who will be truly happy are those who have sought and found how to serve.

Albert Schweitzer
The Three F’s for Being Happy

Friends

Forgiveness

For others

Three F’s But G, There is a Fourth

Gratitude

The word gratitude is derived from the Latin root gratia meaning grace, graciousness, or gratefulness.

Gratitude is a highly prized tenet in Christian, Jewish, Muslim, Hindu and Buddhist teachings.

I am defining gratitude as the experience of something positive gained, coupled with the realization that someone else was responsible for that gain.

I strongly believe that gratitude and compassion can be cultivated.
Sister 1 (low positive emotion)

*With God’s grace, I intend to do my best for our order, for the spread of religion and for my personal satisfaction.*

Sister 2 (high positive emotion)

*The past year has been a very happy one. Now I look forward with eager joy to receiving the Holy Habit of Our Lady and to a life of union with Love Divine.*

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**Positive Emotions in Early Life and Longevity:**
Findings from the Nun Study

Handwritten autobiographies from 180 Catholic nuns (at mean age of 22 years) was scored for emotional content and related to survival during ages 75-95. *Positive emotional content in early-life autobiographies was strongly associated with longevity 6 decades later.*

Danner DD, et al.

*Journal of Personality and Social Psychology; Volume 80:5; 2001*
Happiness positively correlates with academic achievement

• Happiness positively associated with both intrinsic and extrinsic motivation

• Happiness positively associated with GPA for grade 4 – 12 students

Christina Hinton, Harvard Graduate School of Education March 2015

Thorns, Buds and Roses
The Power of Positivity: The Losada Ratio

Marcial Losada’s research led to the Losada Ratio which refers to the ratio of positive expressions to negative expressions.

This ratio has been found to be highly predictive of success as judged by metrics such as profitability.

A ratio between 3 to 6 has been shown to be beneficial (greater positivity is required to counter the weighted power of negativity).
Ancient Reflections and Emerging Science About Gratitude and Happiness

- Gratitude is not only the greatest of virtues, but the parent of all the others. Cicero

- I would maintain that thanks are the highest form of thought, and that gratitude is happiness doubled by wonder. G.K. Chesterton

- To speak gratitude is courteous and pleasant, to enact gratitude is generous and noble, but to live gratitude is to touch heaven. Johannes A. Gaertner
The Happiness Formula

People Who Regularly Practice Grateful Thinking Can Increase Their “Set-Point” for Happiness by 25%

Robert A. Emmons, Ph.D.
A Reference

An Excellent Review


Psychological Bulletin 2012; 1-37

Happiness cannot be pursued; it must ensue ... as the unintended side-effect of one’s personal dedication to a cause greater than one’s self.

Victor Frankl
Success is not the key to happiness.
Happiness is the key to success.

There is no way to happiness.
Happiness is the way.

Thich Nhat Hanh
Teacher gives an assignment to the kids: Write down what you want to be when you grow up.

John writes: Happy and hands the paper to the teacher

The teacher says: John, you did not understand the assignment.

John Lennon replies: And you don’t understand life
The Wisdom of Children

- Mommy, it’s when my heart feels bigger. (5 year old girl)
- Daddy, I am most happy when sharing my toys with my friends. (3 year old boy)

In Which Country Do These Kids Live?

Bhutan
What Some of My Friends and Colleagues Said
Happiness is …

• Being in the moment and being grateful.
• Breaking bread with friends.
• A choice.
• Knowing you have been good to others.
• When my nest is full. When my kids return home and are asleep in their own beds.
• No clinging, no grasping, no regrets, no anticipation, just being in this moment as it is.
• Being content with what you have.
• Putting a smile on a stranger’s face every day.
Question to Siri: What is the secret of happiness?

Siri: It is unequivocally chocolate!
Sign in a Chocolate Shop in Rochester, MN

Money can’t buy happiness but it can buy chocolate, which is kinda like happiness

Amongst the Happiest Countries (2013)

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Hygge
Denmark

- Informal gathering of friends.
- In a setting that is cozy, comfortable and convivial.

Living With Purpose
“The great and glorious masterpiece of man is to live with purpose.”

Defining Your Purpose Can Come by Reflecting on it or By Virtue of a Key Moment in your Life

Great leaders often reflect on key events in their life or a single transformative or ‘magical’ moment. The moment can be jolting and starkly negative, yet it is momentous.

From it emerges a burning desire to have a laser-like focus and passion to make that dream a reality.
Experiencing Sorrow Has Its Own Reward

Most of us will experience sorrow. When you experience the abyss of sorrow and emerge stronger and with a clear purpose, you will have triumphed.

One Can Find A Purpose in the Most Horrific Circumstances

“We who lived in concentration camps can remember the men who walked through the huts comforting others, giving away their last piece of bread. They may have been few in number, but they offer sufficient proof that everything can be taken from a man but one thing: the last of the human freedoms – to choose one’s attitude in any given set of circumstances, to choose one’s own way.”

Victor Frankl
“Every life has a measure of sorrow. Sometimes it is this that awakens us.”

Buddha

Papa Jaime
“The good-to-great leaders never wanted to become larger-than-life heroes. They never aspired to be put on a pedestal or become unreachable icons. They were seemingly ordinary people quietly producing extraordinary results.”

Jim Collins

“Follow your bliss and doors will open where there were no doors before.”

Joseph Campbell
Some of you have undoubtedly heard of this remarkable individual.

Jose Antonio Abreu

El Sistema

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=43tqQhOTCgQ
The Story of El Sistema

The two most important days in your life are the day you are born and the day you find out why.

Mark Twain
Having a purpose in life is the wellspring of sustained happiness.

Sir Ken Robinson
in: Finding Your Element

I should have said, “I love you,” more often.

I should have had the courage to pursue my dreams and aspirations.

I should have traveled more.

I should have been the bigger person and said, “I am sorry.”

I should have spent more time with my friends.

Who says this?
Young People Can Find Their Purpose

Unite For Sight:

As a Yale Pre-Med student, Jennifer Staple was shocked to see so many cases of preventable blindness.

Jennifer Staple
Unite For Sight
If You Could Have One Wish
What Would You Wish For?

• To dance (8 year old girl)

• For my mother to get better, hold my hand and take me to school (8 year old girl)

• A pencil

No, No, You Don’t Understand
You Can Wish for Anything in the World!

• To dance

• To hold my mother’s hand and go to school

• A pencil
PoP Founded With $25.

- **200 schools** built across Africa, Asia and Latin America

- **15 million educational hours** delivered to children in poverty

Have you heard of the Starfish Parable?
My Purpose in Life

To fulfill my Dharma to teach Medicine, about Leadership and Happiness.

To do it grounded in humility, and with an ardent desire to learn every single day.

To express gratitude to my family, friends, colleagues, and students who inspire me in countless ways.

And in some small measure inspire everyone I meet.

I invite you to reflect on what gives you the greatest joy and resonates for you.

Take a few minutes now, or later, and reflect on Your Purpose and write it down.

You may wish to share it with your closest family members and your closest friends.

It is my fervent hope that you will find lasting happiness and it will light up every day of your life.
Namaste

I honor the place in you.
Where the entire universe resides.
I honor the place in you.
Of love, of light, of truth, of peace.
I bow to the divinity and spirit within you.
I’d Like to Start My Talk With a Salutation:

Namaste