

Nisagardatta Maharaj -

All Search for Happiness is Misery

Questioner: I have come from England and I am on my way to Madras. There I shall meet my father and we shall go by car overland to London. I am to study psychology, but I do not yet know what I shall do when I get my degree. I may try industrial psychology, or psychotherapy. My father is a general physician. I may follow the same line.

But this does not exhaust my interests. There are certain questions which do not change with time. I understand you have some answers to such questions and this made me come to see you.

Nisagardatta Maharaj: I wonder whether I am the right man to answer your questions. I know little about things and people. I know only that I am, and that much you also know. We are equals.

Q: Of course I know that I am. But I do not know what it means.

M: What you take to be the 'I' in the 'I am' is not you. To know that you are is natural, to know what you are is the result of much investigation. You will have to explore the entire field of consciousness and go beyond it. For this you must find the right teacher and create the conditions needed for discovery. Generally speaking, there are two ways: external and internal. Either you live with somebody who knows the Truth and submit yourself entirely to his guiding and molding influence, or you seek the inner guide and follow the inner light wherever it takes you. In both cases your personal desires and fears must be disregarded. You learn either by proximity or by investigation, the passive or the active way. You either let yourself be carried by the river of life and love represented by your Guru, or you make your own efforts, guided by your inner star. In both cases you must move on, you must be earnest. Rare are the people who are lucky to find somebody worthy of trust and love. Most of them must take the hard way, the way of intelligence and understanding, of discrimination and detachment (viveka-vairagya). This is the way open to all.

Q: I am lucky to have come here: though I am leaving tomorrow, one talk with you may affect my entire life.

M: Yes, once you say 'I want to find Truth,' all your life will be deeply affected by it. All your mental and physical habits, feelings and emotions, desires and fears, plans and decisions will undergo a most radical transformation.

Q: Once I have made up my mind to find The Reality, what do I do next?

M: It depends on your temperament. If you are earnest, whatever way you choose will take you to your goal. It is the earnestness that is the decisive factor.

Q: What is the source of earnestness?

M: It is the homing instinct, which makes the bird return to its nest and the fish to the mountain stream where it was born. The seed returns to the earth, when the fruit is ripe. Ripeness is all.

Q: And what will ripen me? Do I need experience?

M: You already have all the experience you need, otherwise you would not have come here. You need not gather any more, rather you must go beyond experience. Whatever effort you make, whatever method (sadhana) you follow, will merely generate more experience, but will not take you beyond. Nor will reading books help you. They will enrich your mind, but the person you are will remain intact. If you expect any benefits from your search, material, mental or spiritual, you have missed the point. Truth gives no advantage. It gives you no higher status, no power over others; all you get is truth and the freedom from the false.

Q: Surely truth gives you the power to help others.

M: This is mere imagination, however noble! In truth you do not help others, because there are no others. You divide people into noble and ignoble and ask the noble to help the ignoble. You separate, you evaluate, you judge and condemn -- in the name of truth you destroy it. Your very desire to formulate truth denies it, because it cannot be contained in words. Truth can be expressed only by the denial of the false -- in action. For this you must see the false as false (viveka) and reject it (vairagya). Renunciation of the false is liberating and energizing. It lays open the road to perfection.

Nisargadatta, I am That

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